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# AINSLIE'S

*The Magazine That Entertains*

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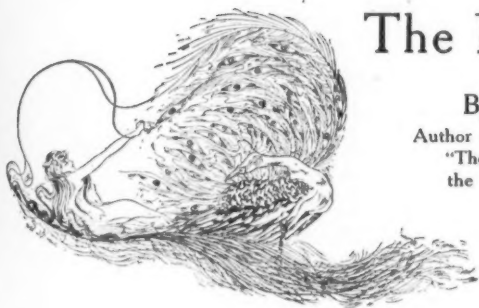
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# AINSLEE'S

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No. 4.



## The Peacock Trees

By G. K. Chesterton

Author of "The Club of Queer Trades,"  
"The Man Who Was Thursday,"  
the "Father Brown" stories, etc.



### CHAPTER I.

SQUIRE VANE was an elderly schoolboy, of English education and Irish extraction. His English education, at one of the great public schools, had preserved his intellect perfectly and permanently at the stage of boyhood. But his Irish extraction subconsciously upset in him the proper solemnity of an old boy and sometimes gave him back the brighter outlook of a naughty boy. He had a bodily impatience which played tricks with him almost against his will and had already rendered him rather too radiant a failure in civil and diplomatic service.

Thus, it is true that compromise is the key of British policy, especially as effecting an impartiality among the religions of India; but Vane's attempt to meet the Moslem halfway, by kicking off one boot at the gates of the mosque, was felt not so much to indicate true impartiality as something that could only be called an aggressive indifference. Again, it is true that an English aristocrat can hardly enter fully into the feelings of either party in a quarrel between a Russian Jew and an

orthodox procession carrying relics; but Vane's idea that the procession might carry the Jew as well, himself a venerable and historic relic, was misunderstood on both sides. In short, he was a man who particularly prided himself on having no nonsense about him; with the result that he was always doing nonsensical things. He seemed to be standing on his head merely to prove that he was hard-headed.

He had just finished a hearty breakfast, in the society of his daughter, at a table under a tree in his garden by the Cornish coast. For, having a glorious circulation, he insisted on as many outdoor meals as possible, though spring had barely touched the woods and warmed the seas round that southern extremity of England. His daughter Barbara, a good-looking girl with heavy red hair and a face as grave as one of the garden statues, still sat almost as motionless as a statue when her father rose. A fine, tall figure in light clothes, with his white hair and mustache flying backward rather fiercely from a face that was good-humored enough—for he carried his very wide

Panama hat in his hand—he strode across the terraced garden, down some stone steps flanked with old ornamental urns, to a more woodland path fringed with little trees, and so down a zigzag road which descended the craggy cliff to the shore, where he was to meet a guest arriving by boat. A yacht was already in the blue bay, and he could see a boat pulling toward the little paved pier.

And yet, in that short walk between the green turf and the yellow sands, he was destined to find his hard-headedness provoked into a not unfamiliar phase which the world was inclined to call hot-headedness. The fact was that the Cornish peasantry, who composed his tenantry and domestic establishment, were far from being people with no nonsense about them. There was, alas, a great deal of nonsense about them; with ghosts, witches, and traditions as old as Merlin, they seemed to surround him with a fairy ring of nonsense. But the magic circle had one center; there was one point to which the curving conversation of the rustics always returned. It was a point that always pricked the squire to exasperation; and even in this short walk, he seemed to strike it everywhere.

He had paused before descending the steps from the lawn, to speak to the gardener about potting some foreign shrubs, and the gardener seemed to be gloomily gratified, in every line of his leathery brown visage, at the chance of indicating that he had formed a low opinion of foreign shrubs.

"We wish you'd get rid of what you've got here, sir," he observed, digging doggedly. "Nothing'll grow right with them here."

"Shrubs!" said the squire, laughing. "You don't call the peacock trees shrubs, do you? Fine, tall trees—you ought to be proud of them."

"Ill weeds grow apace," observed the gardener. "Weeds can grow as tall as

houses, when somebody plants them." Then he added: "Him that sowed tares in the Bible, squire."

"Oh, blast your—" began the squire, and then replaced the more apt and alliterative word "Bible" by the general word "superstition." He was himself a robust rationalist, but he went to church to set his tenants an example. Of what, it would have puzzled him to say.

A little way along the lower path by the trees, he encountered a woodcutter, one Martin, who was more explicit, having more of a grievance. His daughter was at that time seriously ill, with a fever recently common on that coast; and the squire, who was a kind-hearted gentleman, would normally have made allowances for low spirits and loss of temper. But he came near to losing his own again when the peasant persisted in connecting his tragedy with the traditional monomania about the foreign trees.

"If she were well enough, I'd move her," said the woodcutter, "as we can't move them, I suppose. I'd like to get my chopper into them and feel 'em come crashing down."

"One would think they were dragons," said Vane.

"And that's about what they look like," replied Martin. "Look at 'em!"

The woodman was naturally a rougher and even wilder figure than the gardener. His face, also, was brown, and looked like an antique parchment, and it was framed in an outlandish arrangement of raven beard or whiskers, which was really a fashion fifty years old, but might have been five thousand years old or older. Phœnicians, one felt, trading on those strange shores in the morning of the world, might have combed or curled or braided their blue-black hair into some such quaint pattern. For this patch of population was as much a corner of Cornwall as Cornwall is a corner of England; a tragic and

unique race, small and interrelated like a Celtic clan. The clan was older than the Vane family, though that was old as county families go, for in many such parts of England it is the aristocrats who are the latest arrivals. It was the sort of racial type that is supposed to be passing, and perhaps has already passed.

The obnoxious objects stood some hundred yards away from the speaker, who waved toward them with his ax; and there was something suggestive in the comparison. That coast, to begin with, stretching toward the sunset, was itself almost as fantastic as a sunset cloud. It was cut out against the emerald or indigo of the sea in graven horns and crescents that might have been the cast or mold of some such crested serpents, and, beneath, was pierced and fretted by caves and crevices, as if by the boring of such titanic worms. Over and above this draconian architecture of the earth, a veil of gray woods hung thinner like a vapor—woods which the witchcraft of the sea had, as usual, both blighted and blown out of shape. To the right, the trees trailed along the sea front in a single line, each drawn out in thin, wild lines like a caricature. At the other end of their extent, they multiplied into a huddle of hunchbacked trees, a wood spreading toward a projecting part of the high coast. It was here that the sight appeared to which so many eyes and minds seemed to be almost automatically turning.

Out of the middle of this low and more or less level wood rose three separate stems that shot up and soared into the sky like a lighthouse out of the waves or a church spire out of the village roofs. They formed a clump of three columns close together, which might well be the mere bifurcation, or rather trifurcation, of one tree, the lower part being lost or sunken in the thick wood around. Everything

about them suggested something stranger and more southern than anything even in that last peninsular of Britain, which pushes out farthest toward Spain and Africa and the southern stars. Their feathery leafage had sprouted in advance of the faint mist of yellow-green around them, and it was of another and less natural green, tinged with blue, like the colors of a kingfisher. But one might fancy it the scales of some three-headed dragon, towering over a herd of huddled and fleeing cattle.

"I am exceedingly sorry your girl is so unwell," said Vane shortly. "But really——" and he strode down the steep road with plunging strides.

The boat was already secured to the little stone jetty, and the boatman, a younger shadow of the woodcutter and, indeed, a nephew of that useful malcontent, saluted his territorial lord with the sullen formality of the family. The squire acknowledged it casually, and had soon forgotten all such things in shaking hands with the visitor who had just come ashore.

The visitor was a long, loose man, very lean to be so young, whose long, fine features seemed wholly fitted together of bone and nerve and seemed somehow to contrast with his hair, which showed in vivid yellow patches upon his hollow temples under the brim of his white holiday hat. He was carefully dressed in exquisite taste, though he had come straight from a considerable sea voyage, and he carried something in his hand which, in his long European travels and even longer European visits, he had almost forgotten to call a gripsack.

Mr. Cyprian Paynter was an American who lived in Italy. There was a great deal more to be said about him, for he was a very acute and cultivated gentleman, but those two facts would perhaps cover most of the others. Storing his mind like a museum with

the wonders of the old world, but all lit up as by a window with the wonder of the new, he had fallen heir to something of the unique critical position of Ruskin or Pater, and was further famous as a discoverer of minor poets. He was a judicious discoverer, and did not turn all his minor poets into major prophets. If his geese were swans, they were not all Swans of Avon. He had even incurred the deadly suspicion of classicism, by differing from his young friends the Punctuist Poets, when they produced versification consisting exclusively of commas and colons.

He had a more humane sympathy with the modern flame kindled from the embers of Celtic mythology; and it was in reality the recent appearance of a Cornish poet, a sort of parallel to the new Irish poets, which had brought him on this occasion to Cornwall, though he was far too well-mannered to allow his host to guess that. He had a long-standing invitation from Vane, whom he had met in Cyprus in the latter's days of undiplomatic diplomacy; and Vane was not aware that relations had been thus renewed only after the critic had read "Merlin and Other Verses," by a new writer named John Treherne. Nor did the squire even realize the much more diplomatic diplomacy by which he had been induced to invite the local bard to lunch on the very day of the American critic's arrival.

Mr. Paynter was still standing with his gripsack, gazing in admiration at the hollowed crags, topped by the gray, grotesque wood and crested finally by the three fantastic trees.

"It is like being shipwrecked on the coast of fairyland," he said.

"I hope you haven't been shipwrecked much," replied his host, smiling. "I fancy Jake, here, can look after you very well."

Mr. Paynter looked across at the boatman and smiled also.

"I am afraid," he said, "our friend is not quite so enthusiastic for this landscape as I am."

"Oh! The trees, I suppose," said the squire wearily.

The boatman was by normal trade a fisherman, but as his house, built of black, tarred timber, stood right on the foreshore a few yards from the pier, he was employed in such cases as this as a sort of ferryman. He was a big, black-browed youth, generally silent, but something seemed now to sting him into speech.

"Well, sir," he said, "everybody knows it's not natural. Everybody knows the sea blights trees and beats them under, when they're only just trees. These things thrive like some unholy great seaweed that don't belong to the land at all. It's like the blessed sea serpent got on shore, squire, and eating everything up."

"There is some stupid legend," said Squire Vane gruffly. "But come up into the garden. I want to introduce you to my daughter."

When, however, they reached the little table under the tree, the apparently immovable young lady had moved away after all, and it was some time before they came upon the track of her. She had risen, though languidly, and wandered slowly along the upper path of the terraced garden looking down on the lower path where it ran closer to the main bulk of the little wood by the sea. Her languor was not a feebleness, but rather a fullness, of life, like that of a child half awake; she seemed to stretch herself and enjoy everything without noticing anything.

She passed the wood, into the gray huddle of which a single white path vanished through a black hole. Along this part of the terrace ran something like a low rampart or balustrade, embowered with flowers at intervals, and she leaned over it, looking down at another glimpse of the glowing sea be-



hind the clump of trees, and on another irregular path tumbling down to the pier and the boatman's cottage on the beach.

As she gazed, sleepily enough, she saw that a strange figure was very actively climbing the path, apparently coming from the fisherman's cottage, so actively that a moment afterward it came out between the trees and stood upon the path just below her. It was not only a figure strange to her, but one somewhat strange in itself. It was that of a man still young, and seeming somehow younger than his own clothes, which were not only shabby, but antiquated; clothes common enough in texture, yet carried in an uncommon fashion. He wore what was presumably a light waterproof, perhaps through having come off the sea, but it was held at the throat by one button and hung, sleeves and all, more like a cloak than a coat. He rested one bony hand on a black stick; under the shadow of his broad hat, his black hair hung down in a tuft or two. His face, which was swarthy, but rather handsome in itself, wore something that may have been a slightly embarrassed smile, but had too much the appearance of a sneer.

Whether this apparition was a tramp or a trespasser or a friend of some of the fishers or woodcutters, Barbara Vane was quite unable to guess. He removed his hat, still with his unaltered and rather sinister smile, and said civilly:

"Excuse me. The squire asked me to call."

Here he caught sight of Martin, the woodman, who was shifting along the path, thinning the thin trees; and the stranger made a familiar salute with one finger.

The girl did not know what to say.

"Have you—have you come about cutting the wood?" she asked at last.

"I would I were so honest a man," replied the stranger. "Martin is, I

fancy, a distant cousin of mine—we Cornish folk just round here are nearly all related, you know—but I do not cut wood. I do not cut anything, except, perhaps, capers. I am, so to speak, a jongleur."

"A what?" asked Barbara.

"A minstrel, shall we say?" answered the newcomer, and looked up at her more steadily. During a rather odd silence, their eyes rested on each other. What she saw has been already noted, though by her, at any rate, not in the least understood. What he saw was a decidedly beautiful woman with a statuesque face and hair that shone in the sun like a helmet of copper.

"Do you know," he went on, "that in this old place, hundreds of years ago, a jongleur may really have stood where I stand, and a lady may really have looked over that wall and thrown him money?"

"Do you want money?" she asked, all at sea.

"Well," drawled the stranger, "in the sense of lacking it, perhaps. But I fear there is no place now for a minstrel. Except a nigger minstrel. I must apologize for not blacking my face."

She laughed a little in her bewilderment, and said:

"Well, I hardly think you need do that."

"You think the natives here are dark enough already, perhaps," he observed calmly. "After all, we are aborigines, and are treated as such."

She threw out some desperate remark about the weather or the scenery, and wondered what would happen next.

"The prospect is certainly beautiful," he assented, in the same enigmatic manner. "There is only one thing in it I am doubtful about."

While she stood in silence, he slowly lifted his black stick like a long black finger and pointed it at the peacock



trees above the wood. And a queer feeling of disquiet fell on the girl, as if he were, by that mere gesture, doing a destructive act, and could send a blight upon the garden.

The strained and almost painful silence was broken by the voice of Squire Vane, loud even while it was still distant.

"We couldn't make out where you'd got to, Barbara," he said. "This is my friend, Mr. Cyprian Paynter." The next moment he saw the stranger and stopped, a little puzzled.

It was only Mr. Cyprian Paynter himself who was equal to the situation. He had seen, months ago, a portrait of the new Cornish poet in some American literary magazine, and he found himself, to his surprise, the introducer instead of the introduced.

"Why, squire," he said, in considerable astonishment, "don't you know Mr. Treherne? I supposed of course he was a neighbor."

"Delighted to see you, Mr. Treherne," said the squire, recovering his manners with a certain genial confusion. "So pleased you were able to come. This is Mr. Paynter—my daughter." And, turning with a certain boisterous embarrassment, he led the way back to the table under the tree.

Cyprian Paynter followed, inwardly revolving a puzzle which had taken even his experience by surprise. The American, if intellectually an aristocrat, was still socially and subconsciously a democrat. It had never crossed his mind that the poet should be counted lucky to know the squire and not the squire to know the poet. The honest patronage in Vane's hospitality was something which made Paynter suddenly feel that he was, after all, an exile in England.

The squire, anticipating the trial of luncheon with a strange literary man, had dealt with the case tactfully, from his own standpoint. County society

might have made the guest feel like a fish out of water, and, except for the American critic and the local lawyer and doctor, worthy middle-class people who fitted into the picture, he had kept it a family party. He was a widower, and when the meal had been laid out on the garden table, it was Barbara who presided as hostess. She had the new poet on her right hand, and it made her very uncomfortable. She had practically offered that fallacious jongleur money, and it did not make it easier to offer him lunch.

"The whole countryside's gone mad," announced the squire, by way of the latest local news. "It's about this infernal legend of ours."

"I collect legends," said Paynter, smiling. "You must remember that I haven't yet had a chance to collect yours. And this," he added, looking round at the romantic coast, "is a fine theater for anything dramatic."

"Oh, it's dramatic in its way," admitted Vane, not without a faint satisfaction. "It's all about those things over there we call the peacock trees, I suppose because of the queer color of the leaf, you know, though I have heard they make a shrill noise in a high wind that's supposed to be like the shriek of a peacock; something like bamboo in the botanical structure, perhaps. Well, these trees are supposed to have been brought over from Barbary by my ancestor, Sir Walter Vane, one of the Elizabethan patriots or pirates or whatever you call them. They say that at the end of his last voyage, the villagers gathered on the beach down there and saw the boat standing in from the sea, and the new trees stood up in the boat like a mast, all gay with leaves out of season like green bunting. And as they watched, they thought at first that the boat was steering oddly, and then that it wasn't steering at all; and when it drifted to the shore at last, every man in that boat was

dead, and Sir Walter Vane, with his sword drawn, was leaning up against the tree trunk, as stiff as the tree."

"Now this is rather curious," remarked Paynter thoughtfully. "I told you I collected legends, and I fancy I can tell you the beginning of the story of which that is the end, though it comes hundreds of miles across the sea."

He tapped meditatively on the table with his thin taper fingers, like a man trying to recall a tune. He had indeed made a hobby of such fables, and he was not without vanity about his artistic touch in telling them.

"Oh, do tell us your part of it!" cried Barbara Vane, whose air of sunny sleepiness seemed in some vague degree to have fallen from her.

The American bowed across the table with a serious politeness, and then began, playing idly with a quaint ring on his long finger as he talked.

"If you go to the Barbary coast, where the last wedge of the forests narrows down between the desert and the great tideless sea, you will find the natives still telling a strange story about a saint of the Dark Ages. There, on the twilight border of the Dark Continent, you feel the Dark Ages. I have only visited the place once, though it lies, so to speak, opposite to the Italian city where I lived for years, and yet you would hardly believe how the topsy-turvydom and transmigration of this myth somehow seemed less mad than they really are, with the woods loud with lions at night and that dark-red solitude beyond.

"They say that the hermit, St. Securis, living there among trees, grew to love them like companions, since, though great giants with many arms like Briareus, they were the mildest and most blameless of the creatures; they did not devour like the lions, but rather opened their arms to all the little birds. And he prayed that they

might not be tied forever with one foot to the ground, but might be loosened from time to time to walk like other things.

"And the trees were moved upon the prayers of Securis, as they were at the songs of Orpheus. The men of the desert were stricken from afar with fear, seeing the saint walking with a walking grove, like a schoolmaster with his boys. For the trees were thus freed under strict conditions of discipline. They were to return at the sound of the hermit's bell, and above all to copy the wild beasts in walking only—to destroy and devour nothing.

"Well, it is said that one of the trees heard a voice that was not the saint's—that, in the warm green twilight of one summer evening, it became conscious of something sitting and speaking in its branches in the guise of a great bird; and it was that which once spoke from a tree in the guise of a great serpent. As the voice grew louder among its murmuring leaves, the tree was torn with a great desire to stretch out and snatch at the birds that flew harmlessly about their nests and pluck them to pieces. Finally the tempter filled the treetop with his own birds of pride, the starry pageant of the peacocks. And the spirit of the brute overcame the spirit of the tree, and it rent and consumed the blue-green birds till not a plume was left, and returned to the quiet tribe of trees.

"But they say that when the spring came, all the other trees put forth leaves, but this put forth feathers—feathers of a strange hue and pattern. And by that monstrous assimilation, the saint knew of the sin, and he rooted that one tree to the earth with a judgment, so that evil should fall on any who removed it again. That, squire, is the beginning in the deserts of the tale that ended here, almost in this garden."

"And the end is about as reliable as

the beginning, I should say," said Vane. "Yours is a nice, plain tale for a small tea party—a quiet little bit of still life, that is."

"What a queer, horrible story!" exclaimed Barbara. "It makes one feel like a cannibal."

"*Ex Africâ*," said the lawyer, smiling. "It comes from a cannibal country. I think it's the touch of the tar brush—that nightmare feeling that you don't know whether the hero is a plant or a man or a devil. Don't you feel it sometimes in 'Uncle Remus'?"

"True," said Paynter. "Perfectly true." And he looked at the lawyer with a new interest.

The lawyer, who had been introduced as Mr. Ashe, was one of those people who are more worth looking at than most people realize when they look. If Napoleon had been red-haired, and had bent all his powers with a curious contentment upon the petty law suits of a province, he might have looked much the same. The head with the red hair was heavy and powerful; the figure, in its dark, quiet clothes, was comparatively insignificant, as was Napoleon's. He seemed more at ease in the squire's society than the doctor, who, though a gentleman, was a shy one and a mere shadow of his professional brother.

"As you very truly say," remarked Paynter, "the story seems touched with quite barbarous elements—probably negro. Originally, though, I think there was really a hagiological story about some hermit, though some of the higher critics say St. Securis never existed, but was only an allegory of arboriculture, since his name is the Latin for an ax."

"Oh, if you come to that," remarked the poet, Treherne, "you might as well say Squire Vane doesn't exist, and that he's only an allegory for a weather-cock."

Something a shade too cool about this sally drew the lawyer's red brows to-

gether. He looked across the table and met the poet's somewhat equivocal smile.

"Do I understand, Mr. Treherne," asked Ashe, "that you support the miraculous claims of St. Securis in this case? Do you, by any chance, believe in the walking trees?"

"I see men as trees walking," answered the poet, "like the man cured of blindness in the Gospel. By the way, do I understand that you support the miraculous claims of that—Haumaturgist?"

Paynter intervened swiftly and suavely.

"Now that sounds a fascinating piece of psychology. You see men as trees?"

"As I can't imagine why men should walk, I can't imagine why trees shouldn't," answered Treherne.

"Obviously, it is the nature of the organism," interposed the medical guest, Doctor Burton-Brown. "It is necessary in the very type of vegetable structure."

"In other words, a tree sticks in the mud from year's end to year's end," answered Treherne. "So do you stop in your consulting room from ten to eleven every day. And don't you fancy a fairy, looking in at your window for a flash, after having just jumped over the moon and played mulberry bush with the Pleiades, would think you were a vegetable structure, and that sitting still was the nature of the organism?"

"I don't happen to believe in fairies," said the doctor, rather stiffly, for the *argumentum ad hominem* was becoming too common; a sulphurous subconscious anger seemed to radiate from the dark poet.

"Well, I should hope not, doctor," began the squire, in his loud and friendly style; and then stopped, seeing the other's attention arrested. The silent butler waiting on the guests had appeared behind the doctor's chair and was saying something in the low, level

tones of the well-trained servant. He was so smooth a specimen of the type that others never noticed, at first, that he also repeated the dark portrait, however varnished, so common in this particular family of Cornish Celts. His face was sallow, even yellow, and his hair indigo black. He went by the name of Miles. Some felt oppressed by the tribal type in this tiny corner of England. They felt somehow as if all these dark faces were the masks of a secret society.

The doctor rose, with a half bow of apology.

"I must ask pardon for disturbing this pleasant party. I am called away on duty. Please don't let anybody move. We have to be ready for these things, you know. Perhaps Mr. Treherne will admit that my habits are not so very vegetable, after all."

With this Parthian shaft, at which there was some laughter, he strode away very rapidly across the sunny lawn, to where the road dipped down toward the village.

"He is very good among the poor," said the girl, with an honorable seriousness.

"A capital fellow," agreed the squire. "Where is Miles? You will have a cigar, Mr. Treherne?" And he got up from the table. The rest followed, and the group broke up on the lawn.

"Remarkable man, Treherne," said the American to the lawyer conversationally.

"'Remarkable' is the word," assented Ashe rather grimly. "But I don't think I'll make any remark about him."

The squire, too impatient to wait for the yellow-faced Miles, had partaken himself briskly indoors for the cigars, and Barbara found herself once more paired off with the poet, as she floated along the terrace garden; but this time, symbolically enough, upon the same level of the lawn. Mr. Treherne looked

less eccentric after having shed his curious cloak, and seemed a quieter and more casual figure.

"I didn't mean to be rude to you just now," she said abruptly.

"And that's the worst of it," replied the man of letters, "for I'm horribly afraid I did mean to be rude to you. When I looked up and saw you up there, something surged up in me that was in all the revolutions of history. Oh, there was admiration in it, too! Perhaps there was idolatry in all the iconoclasts."

He seemed to have a power of reaching rather intimate conversation in one silent and catlike bound, as he had scaled the steep road, and it made her feel him to be dangerous, and perhaps unscrupulous. She changed the subject sharply, not without a movement toward gratifying her own curiosity.

"What *did* you mean by all that about walking trees?" she asked. "Don't tell me you really believe in a magic tree that eats birds!"

"I should probably surprise you," said Treherne gravely, "more by what I don't believe than by what I do." Then, after a pause, he made a general gesture toward the house and garden. "I'm afraid I don't believe in all this, for instance—in Elizabethan houses and Elizabethan families and the way estates have been improved and the rest of it. Look at our friend the woodcutter now." And he pointed to the man with the quaint black beard, who was still plying his ax upon the timber below. "That man's family goes back for ages, and it was far richer and freer in what you call the Dark Ages than it is now. Wait till the Cornish peasant writes a history of Cornwall."

"But what in the world," she demanded, "has this to do with whether you believe in a tree eating birds?"

"Why should I confess what I believe in?" he said, a muffled drum of

mutiny in his voice. "The gentry came here and took our land and took our labor and took our customs. And now, after exploitation, a viler thing, education! They must take our dreams."

"Well, this dream was rather a nightmare, wasn't it?" asked Barbara, smiling, and the next moment grew quite grave, saying almost anxiously, "But here's Doctor Brown back again. Why, he looks quite upset."

The doctor, a black figure on the green lawn, was indeed coming toward them at a very vigorous walk. His body and gait were much younger than his face, which seemed prematurely lined as with worry. His brow was bald, and projected from the straight dark hair behind it. He was visibly paler than when he had left the lunch table.

"I am sorry to say, Miss Vane," he said, "that I am the bearer of bad news to poor Martin, the woodman here. His daughter died half an hour ago."

"Oh," cried Barbara warmly, "I am so sorry!"

"So am I," said the doctor, and passed on rather abruptly. He ran down the stone steps between the stone urns, and they saw him in talk with the woodcutter. They could not see the woodcutter's face—he stood with his back to them—but they saw something that seemed more moving than any change of countenance. The man's hand holding the ax rose high above his head, and for a flash it seemed as if he would have cut down the doctor. But in fact he was not looking at the doctor. His face was set toward the cliff, where, sheer out of the dwarf forest, rose, gigantic and gilded by the sun, the trees of pride.

The strong brown hand made a movement and was empty. The ax went circling swiftly through the air, its head showing like a silver crescent against the gray twilight of the trees. It did not reach its tall objective, but

fell among the undergrowth, shaking up a flying litter of birds. But in the poet's memory, full of primal things, something seemed to say that he had seen the birds of some pagan augury, the ax of some pagan sacrifice.

A moment after, the man made a heavy movement forward, as if to recover his tool, but the doctor put a hand on his arm.

"Never mind that now," they heard him say, sadly and kindly. "The squire will excuse you any more work, I know."

Something made the girl look at Treherne. He stood gazing, his head a little bent, and one of his black elf locks had fallen forward over his forehead. And again she had the sense of a shadow over the grass. She almost felt as if the grass were a host of fairies, and that the fairies were not her friends.

## CHAPTER II.

It was more than a month before the legend of the peacock trees was again discussed in the squire's circle. It fell out one evening, when his eccentric taste for meals in the garden had gathered the company round the same table, now lit with a lamp and laid out for dinner in a glowing spring twilight. It was even the same company, for, in the few weeks intervening, they had insensibly grown more and more into one another's lives, forming a little group like a club. The American aesthete was of course the most active agent, his resolution to pluck out the heart of the Cornish poet's mystery leading him again and again to influence his flighty host for such reunions. Even Mr. Ashe, the lawyer, seemed to have swallowed his half-humorous prejudice; and the doctor, though a rather sad and silent, was a companionable and considerate man.

Paynter had even read Treherne's poetry aloud, and he read admirably.

He had also read other things, not aloud, grubbing up everything in the neighborhood, from guide books to epitaphs, that could throw a light on local antiquities. And it was that evening, when the lamplight and the last daylight kindled the colors of the wine and silver on the table under the tree, that he announced a new discovery.

"Say, squire," he remarked, with one of his rare Americanisms, "about those bogey trees of yours. I don't believe you know half the tales told round here about them. It seems they have a way of eating things. Not that I have any ethical objection to eating things," he conceded, helping himself elegantly to green cheese, "but I have more or less, broadly speaking, an objection to eating people."

"Eating people!" repeated Barbara.

"I know a globe-trotter mustn't be fastidious," replied Mr. Paynter, "but I repeat firmly, an objection to eating people. The peacock trees seem to have progressed since the happy days of innocence when they only ate peacocks. If you ask the people here—the fisherman who lives on that beach, or the man that mows this very lawn in front of us—they'll tell you tales taller than any tropical one I brought you from the Barbary coast. If you ask them what happened to the fisherman Peters, who got drunk on All Hallows' Eve, they'll tell you he lost his way in that little wood, tumbled down asleep under the wicked trees, and then—evaporated, vanished, was licked up like dew by the sun. If you ask them where Harry Hawke is, the widow's little son, they'll just tell you he's swallowed—that he was dared to climb the trees and sit there all night, and did it. What the trees did, God knows. The habits of a vegetable ogre leave one a little vague. But they even add the agreeable detail that a new branch appears on the tree when somebody has petered out in this style."

"What new nonsense is this?" cried Vane. "I know there's some crazy yarn about the trees spreading fever, though every educated man knows why these epidemics return occasionally. And I know they say you can tell the noise of them among other trees in a gale, and I dare say you can. But even Cornwall isn't a lunatic asylum, and a tree that dines on a passing tourist seems——"

"Well, the two tales are reconcilable enough," put in the poet quietly. "If there were a magic that killed men when they came close, it's likely to strike them with sickness when they stand far off. In the old romances, the dragon that devours some people often blasts others with a sort of poisonous breath."

Ashe looked across at the speaker steadily, not to say stonily.

"Do I understand," he inquired, "that you swallow the swallowing trees, too?"

Treherne's dark smile was still on the defensive. His fencing always annoyed the other, and he seemed not without malice in the matter.

"Swallowing is a metaphor," he said, "about me, if not about the trees. And metaphors take us at once into dreamland—no bad place, either. This garden, I think, gets more and more like a dream, at this corner of the day and night, that might lead us anywhere."

The yellow horn of the moon had appeared silently and as if suddenly over the black horns of the sea wood, seeming to announce as night something that till then had been evening. A night breeze came in between the trees and raced stealthily across the turf; and as they ceased speaking, they heard, not only the seething grass, but the sea itself move and sound in all the cracks and caves round them and below them and on every side. They all felt the note that had been struck, the American as an art critic and the poet as a



poet; and the squire, who believed himself boiling with an impatience purely rational, did not really understand his own impatience. In him, more perhaps than the others, more certainly than he knew himself, the sea wind went to the head like wine.

"Credulity is a curious thing," went on Treherne in a low voice. "It is more negative than positive, and yet it is infinite. Hundreds of men will avoid walking under a ladder. They don't know where the door of the ladder will lead. They don't really think God would throw a thunderbolt at them for such a thing. They don't know what would happen—that is just the point; but they step aside as from a precipice. So the poor people here may or may not believe anything. They don't go into those trees at night."

"I walk under a ladder whenever I can!" cried Vane, in quite unnecessary excitement.

"You belong to a Thirteen Club," said the poet. "You walk under a ladder on Friday to dine thirteen at a table, everybody spilling the salt. But even you don't go into those trees at night."

Squire Vane stood up, his silver hair blowing in the strengthening wind.

"I'll stop all night in your tomfool wood and up your tomfool trees!" he said. "I'll do it for twopence or two thousand pounds, if any one will take the bet!"

Without waiting for reply, he snatched up his wide white hat and settled it on with a fierce gesture, and had gone off in great leonine strides across the lawn before any one at the table could move.

The stillness was broken by Miles, the butler, who dropped and broke one of the plates he carried. He stood looking after his master with his long, angular chin thrust out, looking yellow where it caught the yellow light of the lamp below. His face was thus

sharply in shadow, but Paynter fancied for a moment it was convulsed by some passion passing surprise. But the face was quite as usual when it turned, and Paynter realized that a night of fancies had begun, like the cross, purposes of the "Midsummer Night's Dream."

The wood of the strange trees, toward which the squire was walking, lay so far forward on the headland which ultimately almost overhung the sea that it could be approached by only one path, which shone clearly like a silver ribbon in the twilight. The ribbon ran along the edge of the cliff, where the single row of deformed trees ran beside it all the way, and eventually plunged into the closer mass of trees by one natural gateway, a mere gap in the wood, looking dark like a lion's mouth. What became of the path inside could not be seen, but it doubtless led round the hidden roots of the great central trees. The squire was already within a yard or two of this dark entry when his daughter rose from the table and took a step or two after him, as if to call him back.

Treherne had also risen, and stood as if dazed at the effect of his idle defiance. When Barbara moved, he seemed to recover himself, and, stepping after her, said something which Paynter did not hear. He said it casually and even distantly enough, but it clearly suggested something to her mind, for, after a moment's thought, she nodded and walked back, not toward the table, but apparently toward the house. Paynter looked after her with a momentary curiosity; and when he turned again, the squire had vanished into the hole in the wood.

"He's gone," said Treherne, with a clang of finality in his tones like the slamming of a door.

"Well, suppose he has?" cried the lawyer, roused at the voice. "The squire can go into his own wood, I suppose. What the devil's all the fuss



about, Mr. Paynter? Don't tell me you think there's any harm in that plantation of sticks?"

"No, I don't," said Paynter, throwing one leg over the other and lighting a cigar. "But I shall stop here till he comes out."

"Very well," said Ashe shortly. "I'll stop with you, if only to see the end of this farce."

The doctor said nothing, but he also kept his seat and accepted one of the American's cigars. If Treherne had been attending to the matter, he might have noted, with his sardonic superstition, a curious fact—that while all three men were tacitly condemning themselves to stay out all night if necessary, all, by one blank of omission or oblivion, assumed that it was impossible to follow their host into the wood just in front of them.

But Treherne, though still in the garden, had wandered away from the garden table and was pacing along the single line of trees against the dark sea. They had, in their regular interstices, showing the sea as through a series of windows, something of the look of the ghost or skeleton of a cloister; and he, having thrown his coat once more over his neck like a cape, passed to and fro like the ghost of some not very sane monk.

All these men, whether sceptics or mystics, looked back for the rest of their lives on that night as on something unnatural. They sat still or started up abruptly, and paced the great dark garden in long detours, so that it seemed that no three of them were together at a time, and none knew who would be his companion; yet their rambling remained within the same dim and hazy space. They fell into snatches of uneasy slumber. These were very brief, and yet they felt as if the whole sitting, strolling, or occasional speaking had been parts of a single dream.

Paynter woke once and found Ashe

sitting opposite him at a table otherwise empty, his face dark in shadow and his cigar end like the red eye of a Cyclops. Until the lawyer spoke, in his steady voice, Paynter was positively afraid of him. He answered at random and nodded again. When he again woke, the lawyer was gone, and what was opposite him was the bald, pale brow of the doctor. There seemed suddenly something ominous in the familiar fact that he wore spectacles. And yet the vanishing Ashe had only vanished a few yards away, for he turned at that instant and strolled back to the table. With a jerk, Paynter realized that his nightmare was but a trick of sleep or sleeplessness, and spoke in his natural voice, but rather loud:

"So you've joined us again. Where's Treherne?"

"Oh, still revolving, I suppose, like a polar bear, under those trees on the cliff," replied Ashe, motioning with his cigar, "looking at what an older and—you will forgive me for thinking—a somewhat better poet called the 'wine-dark sea.' It really has a sort of purple shade. Look at it."

Paynter looked. He saw the wine-dark sea and the fantastic trees that fringed it, but he did not see the poet. The cloister was already emptied of its restless monk.

"Gone somewhere else," he said with a futility far from characteristic. "He'll be back here presently. This is an interesting vigil, but a vigil loses some of its intensity when you can't keep awake. Ah, here's Treherne. So we're all mustered, as the politician said when Mr. Coleman came late for dinner. No, the doctor's off again. How restless we all are!"

The poet had drawn near, his feet falling soft on the grass, and was gazing at them with a singular attentiveness.

"It will soon be over," he said.

"What?" snapped Ashe, very abruptly.

"The night, of course," replied Treherne, in a motionless manner. "The darkest hour has passed."

"Didn't some other minor poet remark," inquired Paynter flippantly, "that the darkest hour before the dawn— My God, what was that? It was like a scream."

"It was a scream," replied the poet. "The scream of a peacock."

Ashe stood up, his strong face pale against his red hair, and said furiously:

"What the devil do you mean?"

"Oh, perfectly natural causes, as Doctor Brown would say," replied Treherne. "Didn't the squire tell us the trees had a shrill note of their own when the wind blew? The wind's beating up again from the sea. I shouldn't wonder if there was a storm before dawn."

Dawn indeed came gradually, with a growing noise of wind, and the purple sea began to boil about the dark volcanic cliffs. The first change in the sky showed itself only in the shapes of the wood and the single stems growing darker, but clearer; and above the gray clump, against a glimpse of growing light, they saw aloft the evil trinity of the trees. In their long lines there seemed to Paynter something faintly serpentine and even spiral. He could almost fancy he saw them slowly revolving as in some cyclic dance; but this, again, was but a last delusion of dreamland, for a few seconds later, he was again asleep. In dreams he toiled through a tangle of inconclusive tales, each filled with the same stress and noise of sea and sea wind; and above and outside all other voices rose the wailing of the trees of pride.

When he woke, it was broad day, and a bloom of early light lay on wood and garden and on fields and farms for miles away. The comparative com-

mon sense that daylight brings, even to the sleepless, drew him alertly to his feet and showed him all his companions standing about the lawn in similar attitudes of expectancy. There was no need to ask what they were expecting. They were waiting to hear the nocturnal experiences—comic or commonplace or whatever they might prove to be—of that eccentric friend whose experiment—whether from some subconscious fear or some fancy of honor—they had not ventured to interrupt.

Hour followed hour, and still nothing stirred in the wood save an occasional bird. The squire, like most men of his type, was an early riser, and it was not likely that he would in this case sleep late. It was much more likely, in the excitement in which he had left them, that he would not sleep at all. Yet it was clear that he must be sleeping, perhaps by some reaction from a strain. By the time the sun was high in heaven, Ashe, the lawyer, turning to the others, spoke abruptly and to the point.

"Shall we go into the wood now?" asked Paynter, and almost seemed to hesitate.

"I will go in," said Treherne simply. Then, drawing up his dark head in answer to their glances, he added: "Oh, do not trouble yourselves. It is never the believer who is afraid."

For the second time, they saw a man mount the white, curling path and disappear into the gray, tangled wood, but this time they did not have to wait long to see him again.

A few minutes later, he reappeared in the woodland gateway and came slowly toward them across the grass. He stopped before the doctor, who stood nearest, and said something. It was repeated to the others and went round the ring with low cries of incredulity. The others plunged into the wood and returned wildly, and were

seen speaking to others again who gathered from the house. The wild wireless telegraphy which is the education of countryside communities spread it further and further before the fact itself was fully realized, and before nightfall a quarter of the county knew that Squire Vane had vanished like a burst bubble.

Widely as the wild tale was repeated and patiently as it was pondered, it was long before there was even the beginning of a sequel to it. In the interval, Paynter had politely removed himself from the house of mourning, or rather of questioning, but only so far as the village inn; for Barbara Vane was glad of the traveler's experience and sympathy, in addition to that afforded her by the lawyer and doctor as old friends of the family. Even Treherne was not discouraged from his occasional visits, with a view to helping the hunt for the lost man.

The five held many counsels round the old garden table, at which the unhappy master of the house had dined for the last time; and Barbara wore her old mask of stone, if it was now more a tragic mask. She had shown no passion after the first morning of discovery, when she had broken forth once, speaking strangely enough, in the view of some of her hearers.

She had come slowly out of the house, to which her own or some one else's wisdom had relegated her during the night of the wager, and it was clear from her face that somebody had told her the truth. Miles, the butler, stood on the steps behind her, and it had probably been he.

"Do not be too much distressed, Miss Vane," said Doctor Brown, in a low and rather uncertain voice. "The search in the wood has hardly begun. I am convinced we shall find—something quite simple."

"The doctor is right," said Ashe, in his firm tones. "I myself——"

"The doctor is no right," said the girl, turning a white face on the speaker. "I know better. The poet is right. The poet is always right. Oh, he has been here from the beginning of the world and has seen wonders and terrors that are all round our path and only hiding behind a bush or a stone. You and your doctoring and your science—why, you have only been here for a few fumbling generations, and you can't conquer even your own enemies of the flesh. Oh, forgive me, doctor! I know you do splendidly. But the fever comes in the village, and the people die and die, for all that. And now it's my poor father. God help us all! The only thing left is to believe in God, for we can't help believing in devils."

And she left them, still walking quite slowly, but in such a fashion that no one could go after her.

The spring had already begun to ripen into summer and spread a green tent from the tree over the garden table when the American visitor, sitting there with his two professional companions, broke the silence by saying what had long been in his mind.

"Well," he said, "I suppose, whatever we may think it wise to say, we have all begun to think of a possible conclusion. It can't be put very delicately anyhow, but, after all, there's a very necessary business side to it. What are we going to do about poor Vane's affairs, apart from Vane himself? I suppose you know," he added in a low voice to the lawyer, "whether he made a will?"

"He left everything to his daughter unconditionally," replied Ashe, "but nothing can be done with it. There's no proof whatever that he's dead."

"No legal proof," remarked Paynter dryly.

A wrinkle of irritation had appeared

in the big, bald brow of Doctor Brown, and he made an impatient movement.

"Of course he's dead," he said. "What's the sense of all this legal fuss? We were watching this side of the wood, weren't we? A man couldn't have flown off those high cliffs over the sea; he could only have fallen off. What else can he be but dead?"

"I speak as a lawyer," returned Ashe, raising his eyebrows. "We can't presume his death or have an inquest or anything till we find the poor fellow's body, or some remains that may reasonably be presumed to be his body."

"I see," observed Paynter quietly. "You speak as a lawyer. But I don't think it's very hard to guess what you think as a man."

"I own I'd rather be a man than a lawyer," said the doctor, rather roughly. "I'd no notion the law was such an ass. What's the good of keeping the poor girl out of her property, and the estate all going to pieces? Well, I must be off, or my patients will go to pieces, too." And with a curt salutation, he pursued his old path down to the village.

"That man does his duty, if anybody does," remarked Paynter. "We must pardon him his—shall I say 'manner' or 'manners'?"

"Oh, I bear him no malice," replied Ashe good-humoredly, "but I'm glad he's gone, because—well, because I don't want him to know yet how jolly right he is." And he leaned back in his chair and stared up at the roof of green leaves.

"You are sure," said Paynter, looking at the table, "that Squire Vane is dead?"

"More than that," said Ashe, still staring at the leaves. "I'm sure of how he died."

"Ah," said the American, with an intake of breath, and they remained for

a moment, one gazing at the tree and the other at the table.

"Sure" is perhaps too strong a word," continued Ashe, "but my conviction will want some shaking. I don't envy the counsel for the defense."

"The counsel for the defense?" repeated Paynter, and looked up quickly at his companion.

He was struck again by the man's Napoleonic chin and jaw, as he had been when they first had talked of the legend of St. Securis.

"Then," he began, "you don't think the trees—"

"The trees be damned!" snorted the lawyer. "The tree had two legs on that evening. What our friend the poet," he added with a sneer, "would call a walking tree. Apropos of our friend the poet, you seemed surprised that night to find that he was not walking poetically by the sea all the time, and I fear I affected to share your ignorance. I was not so sure then as I am now."

"Sure of what?" demanded the other.

"To begin with," said Ashe, "I'm sure our friend the poet followed Vane into the wood that night, for I saw him coming out again."

Paynter leaned forward, suddenly pale with excitement, and struck the wooden table so that it rattled.

"Mr. Ashe, you're wrong!" he cried. "You're a wonderful man and you're wrong! You've probably got tons of convincing evidence, and you're wrong! I know this poet. I know him as a poet, and that's just what you don't. I know you think he gave you crooked answers and seemed to be all smiles and black looks at once, but you don't understand the type. I know now why you don't understand the Irish. Sometimes you think it's soft, and sometimes sly, and sometimes murderous, and sometimes uncivilized, and all the time it's only civilized, quivering with the

sensitive irony of understanding all that you don't understand."

"Well," said Ashe shortly, "we'll see who's right."

"We will!" cried Cyprian, and rose suddenly from the table. All the drooping pose of the aesthete had dropped from him. His Yankee accent rose high like a horn of defiance, and there was nothing about him but the New World.

"I guess I will look into this myself," he said, stretching his long limbs like an athlete. "I'll search that little wood of yours to-morrow. It's a bit late, or I'd do it now."

"The wood has been searched," said the lawyer, rising also.

"Yes," drawled the American. "It's been searched by servants, policemen, local policemen, and quite a lot of people, and do you know, I have a notion that nobody round here is likely to have searched it at all?"

"And what are you going to do with it?" asked Ashe.

"What I bet they haven't done," replied Cyprian. "I'm going to climb a tree."

And with a quaint air of renewed cheerfulness, he took himself away at a rapid walk to his inn.

He appeared at daybreak next morning outside the Vane Arms with all the air of one setting out on his travels in distant lands. He had a field glass slung over his shoulder and a very large sheath knife buckled by a belt round his waist and carried with the cool bravado of the bowie knife of a cowboy. But in spite of this backwoodsman's simplicity, or perhaps rather because of it, he eyed with rising relish the picturesque plan and sky line of the antiquated village, and especially the wooden square of the old inn sign that hung over his head—a shield of which the charges seemed to him a mere medley of blue dolphins, gold crosses, and scarlet birds. The colors and cubic

corners of that painted board pleased him like a play or a puppet show.

He stood staring and straddling for some moments on the cobbles of the little market place. Then he gave a short laugh and began to mount the steep streets toward the high park and garden beyond. From the high lawn, and above the tree and the table, he could see on one side the land stretch away past the house into a great rolling plain, which, under the clear edges of the dawn, seemed dotted with picturesque details. The woods here and there on the plain looked like green hedgehogs, as grotesque as the incongruous beasts found unaccountably walking in the blank spaces of medieval maps. The land, cut up into colored fields, recalled the heraldry of the sign-board; it, also, was at once ancient and gay.

On the other side, the ground to seaward swept down and then up again to the famous or infamous wood. The square of strange trees lay slightly tilted on the slope, also suggesting, if not a map, at least a bird's-eye view. Only the triple centerpiece of the peacock trees rose clear of the sky line; and these stood up in the tranquil sunlight as things almost classical, a triangular temple of the winds. They seemed pagan in a newer and more placid sense, and he felt a newer and more boyish curiosity and courage for the consulting of the oracle. In all his wandering, he had never walked so lightly. For the connoisseur of sensations had found something to do at last; he was fighting for a friend.

He was brought to a standstill once, however, and that at the very gateway of the garden of the trees of knowledge. Just outside the black entry of the wood, now curtained with greener and larger leafage, he came on a solitary figure. It was Martin, the woodcutter, wading in bracken and looking about him in rather a lost fash-

ion. He seemed to be talking to himself.

"I dropped it here," he was saying, "but I'll never work with it again, I reckon. Doctor wouldn't let me pick it up, when I wanted to pick it up, and now they've got it, like they've got the squire. Wood and iron, wood and iron. But eating it's nothin' to them."

"Come," said Paynter kindly, remembering the man's domestic trouble. "Miss Vane will see you have anything you want, I know. And look here, don't brood on all those stories about the squire. Is there the slightest trace of the trees having anything to do with it? Is there even this extra branch the idiots talked about?"

There had been growing on Paynter the suspicion that the man before him was not perfectly sane, yet he was much more startled by the sudden and cold sanity that looked for an instant out of the woodman's eyes, as he answered in his ordinary manner:

"Well, sir, did you count the branches before?"

Then he seemed to relapse, and Paynter left him wandering and wavering in the undergrowth and entered the wood like one across whose sunny path a shadow has fallen for an instant.

Diving under the wood, he was soon threading a leafy path which, even under that summer sun, shone only with an emerald twilight, as if it were on the floor of the sea. It wound about more snakily than he had supposed, as if resolved to approach the central trees as if they were the heart of the maze at Hampton Court. They were the heart of the maze for him, anyhow. He sought them as straight as a crooked road would carry him, and, turning a final corner, he beheld for the first time the foundations of those towers of vegetation he had as yet seen only from above, as they stood waist-high in the woodland. He found the suspicion correct which supposed that the three

branched from one great root, like a candelabrum. The fork, though stained and slimy with green fungoids, was quite near the ground and offered a first foothold. He put his foot in it, and without a flash of hesitation went aloft, like Jack-climbing the beanstalk.

Above him the green roof of leaves and boughs seemed sealed like a firmament of foliage, but, by bending and breaking the branches to right and left, he slowly forced a passage upward and had at last, and suddenly, the sensation of coming out on the top of the world. He felt as if he had never been in the open air before. Sea and land lay in a circle below and about him, as he sat astride a branch of the tall tree. He was almost surprised to see the sun still comparatively low in the sky, as if he were looking over a land of eternal sunrise.

"'Silent upon a peak in Darien,'" he remarked, in a needlessly loud and cheerful voice, and though the claim, thus expressed, was illogical, it was not inappropriate. He did feel as if he were a primitive adventurer just come to the New World, instead of a modern traveler just come from it.

"I wonder," he proceeded, "whether I am really the first that ever burst into this silent tree. It looks like it——"

He stopped and sat on his branch quite motionless, but his eyes were turned on a branch a little below it, and they were brilliant with vigilance, like those of a man watching a snake.

What he was looking at might, at first sight, have been a large white fungus spreading on the smooth and monstrous trunk, but it was not. Leaning down dangerously from his perch, he detached it from the twig on which it had caught, and then sat holding it in his hand and gazing at it. It was Squire Vane's white Panama hat, but there was no Squire Vane under it. Paynter felt a nameless relief in the very fact that there was not.



There in the clear sunlight and sea air, for an instant, all the tropical terrors of his own idle tale surrounded and suffocated him. It seemed indeed some demon tree of the swamps, a vegetable serpent that fed on men. Even the hideous farce in the fancy of digesting a whole man with the exception of his hat seemed only to simplify the nightmare. And he found himself gazing dully at one leaf of the tree, which happened to be turned toward him so that the odd markings, which had partly made the legend, really looked a little like the eye in a peacock's feather. It was as if the sleeping tree had opened one eye upon him.

With a sharp effort, he steadied himself in mind and posture on the bough. His reason returned, and he began to descend with the hat in his teeth. When he was back in the underworld of the wood, he studied the hat again, and with closer attention. In one place in the crown there was a hole or rent, which certainly had not been there when it had last lain on the table under the garden tree. He sat down, lit a cigarette, and reflected for a long time.

A wood, even a small wood, is not an easy thing to search minutely, but he provided himself with some practical tests in the matter. In one sense, the very density of the thicket was a help. He could at least see where any one had strayed from the path, by broken and trampled growths of every kind. After many hours' industry, he had made a sort of new map of the place, and had decided beyond doubt that some person or persons had so strayed, for some purpose, in several defined directions. There was a way burst through the bushes, making a short cut across a loop of the wandering path; there was another forking out from it, as an alternative way into the central space. But there was one especially which was unique, and which seemed to

him, the more he studied it, to point to some essential of the mystery.

One of these beaten and broken tracks went from the space under the peacock trees outward into the wood for about twenty yards, and then stopped. Beyond that point, not a twig was broken, not a leaf disturbed. It had no exit, but he could not believe that it had no goal. After some further reflection, he knelt down and began to cut away grass and clay with his great knife, and was surprised at the ease with which they detached themselves. In a few moments, a whole section of the soil lifted like a lid. It was a round lid and presented a quaint appearance, like a flat cap with green feathers. For though the disk itself was made of wood, there was a layer of earth on it, with the live grass still growing there. And the removal of the round lid revealed a round hole, black as night and seemingly bottomless.

Paynter understood it instantly. It was rather near the sea for a well to be sunk, but the traveler had known wells sunk even nearer. He rose to his feet with the great knife in his hand, a frown on his face, and his doubts resolved. He no longer shrank from naming what he knew. This was not the first corpse that had been thrown down a well. Here, without stone or epitaph, was the grave of Squire Vane. In a flash all the mythological follies about saints and peacocks were forgotten. He was knocked on the head, as with a stone club, by the human common sense of crime.

Cyprian Paynter stood long by the well in the wood, walked around it in meditation, examined its rim and the ring of grass about it, searched the surrounding soil thoroughly, came back and stood beside the well once more. His researches and reflections had been so long that he had not realized that the day had passed, and that the wood and the world around it were beginning al-



ready to be steeped in the enrichment of evening. The day had been radiantly calm; the sea seemed to be as still as the well, and the well was as still as a mirror. And then, quite without warning, the mirror moved of itself like a living thing.

In the well in the wood the water leaped and gurgled, with a grotesque noise like something swallowing, and then settled again with a second sound. Cyprian could not see into the well clearly, for the opening, from where he stood, was an ellipse, a mere slit, and half masked by thistles and rank grass like a green beard. For where he stood, now, was three yards away from the well, and he had not yet himself realized that he had sprung back all that distance from the brink when the water spoke.

### CHAPTER III.

Cyprian Paynter did not know what he expected to see rise out of the well—the corpse of the murdered man or merely the spirit of the fountain. Anyhow, neither of them rose out of it, and he recognized, after an instant, that this was, after all, perhaps the more natural course of things. Once more he pulled himself together, walked to the edge of the well, and looked down. He saw, as before, a dim glimmer of water, at that depth no brighter than ink. He fancied he still heard a faint convulsion and murmur, but it gradually subsided to an utter stillness. Short of suicidally diving in, there was nothing to be done.

He realized that, with all his equipment, he had not brought anything like a rope or a bucket, and at length decided to return for them. As he retraced his steps to the entrance, he recurred to, and took stock of, his more solid discoveries. Somebody had gone into the wood, killed the squire, and thrown him down the well. He did not admit for a moment that it was his

friend the poet, but if the latter had actually been seen coming out of the wood, the matter was serious. As he walked, the rapidly darkening twilight was cloven with red gleams which made him almost fancy for a moment that some fantastic criminal had set fire to that tiny forest as he fled. A second glance showed him nothing but one of those red sunsets in which such serene days sometimes close.

As he came out of the gloomy gate of trees into the full glow, he saw a dark figure standing quite still in the dim bracken, on the spot where he had left the woodcutter. It was not the woodcutter. It was topped by a tall black hat of a funereal type, and the whole figure stood so black against the field of crimson fire that edged the sky line that he could not for an instant understand or recall it. When he did, it was with an odd change in the whole channel of his thoughts.

"Doctor Brown!" he cried. "Why, what are you doing here?"

"I have been talking to poor Martin," answered the doctor, and made a rather awkward movement with his hand toward the road down to the village. Following the gesture, Paynter dimly saw another dark figure walking away in the blood-red distance. He also saw that the hand motioning was really black and not merely in shadow, and, coming nearer, found that the doctor's dress was really funereal, down to the details of dark gloves. It gave the American a small, but queer shock, as if this were actually an undertaker come up to bury the corpse that could not be found.

"Poor Martin's been looking for his chopper," observed Doctor Brown, "but I told him I'd picked it up and kept it for him. Between ourselves, I hardly think he's fit to be trusted with it." Then, seeing the glance at his black garb, he added: "I've just been to a funeral. Did you know there's been

another loss? Poor Jake the fisherman's wife, down in the cottage on the shore, you know. This infernal fever, of course."

As they both turned to face the red evening light, Paynter instinctively made a closer study, not merely of the doctor's clothes, but of the doctor. Doctor Burton-Brown was a tall, alert man, neatly dressed, who would have had an almost military air but for his spectacles and an almost painful intellectualism in his lean brown face and bald brow. The contrast was clinched by the fact that, while his face was of the ascetic type generally conceived as clean-shaven, he had a strip of dark mustache cut too short for him to bite, and yet a mouth that often moved as if trying to bite it. He might have been a very intelligent army surgeon, but he had more the look of an engineer, or one of those services that combine a military silence with a more than military science. Paynter had always respected something ruggedly reliable about the man, and after a little hesitation, he told him all the discoveries.

The doctor took the hat of the dead squire in his hand and examined it with frowning care. He put one finger through the hole in the crown and moved it meditatively. And Paynter realized how fanciful his own fatigue must have made him, for so silly a thing as the black finger wagging through the rent in that frayed white relic unreasonably displeased him. The doctor soon made the same discovery, with professional acuteness, and applied it much further. For when Paynter began to tell him of the moving water in the well, he looked at him a moment through his spectacles, and then said:

"Did you have any lunch?"

Paynter for the first time realized that he had, as a fact, worked furiously all day without food.

"Please don't fancy I mean you had

too much lunch," said the medical man, with mournful humor. "On the contrary, I mean you had too little. I think you are a bit knocked out, and your nerves exaggerate things. Anyhow, let me advise you not to do any more to-night. There's nothing to be done without ropes or some sort of fishing tackle, if with that, but I think I can get you some of the sort of grappling irons the fishermen use for dragging. Poor Jake's got some, I know. I'll bring them round to you to-morrow morning. The fact is I'm staying there for a bit, as he's rather in a state, and I think it's better for me to ask for the things, and not a stranger. I am sure you'll understand."

Paynter understood sufficiently to assent, and hardly knew why he stood vacantly watching the doctor make his way down the steep road to the shore and the fisher's cottage. Then he threw off thoughts he had not examined, or even consciously entertained, and walked rather heavily back to the Vane Arms.

The doctor, still funereal in manner, though no longer so in costume, appeared punctually under the wooden sign next morning, laden with what he had promised—an apparatus of hooks and a hanging net for hoisting up anything sunk to a reasonable depth. He was about to proceed on his professional round, and said nothing further to deter the American from proceeding on his own very unprofessional experiment as a detective. That buoyant amateur had indeed recovered most, if not all, of yesterday's buoyancy, was now well fitted to pass any medical examination, and returned with all his energy to the scene of yesterday's labors.

It may well have brightened and made breezier his second day's toil that he had, not only the sunlight and the

birds singing in the little wood, to say nothing of a more scientific apparatus to work with, but also human companionship, and that of the most intelligent type. After leaving the doctor and before leaving the village, he had bethought himself of seeking the little square where stood the quiet brown house of Andrew Ashe, solicitor, and the operations of dragging were worked in double harness. Two heads were peering over the well in the wood, one yellow-haired, lean, and eager, the other red-haired, heavy, and pondering; and if it be true that two heads are better than one, it is truer that four hands are better than two. In any case, their united and repeated efforts bore fruit at last, if anything so hard and meager and forlorn can be called a fruit. It weighed loosely in the net as it was lifted and rolled out on the grassy edge of the well. It was a bone.

Ashe picked it up and stood with it in his hand, frowning.

"We want Doctor Brown here," he said. "This may be the bone of some animal. Any dog or sheep might fall into a hidden well." Then he broke off, for his companion was already detaching a second bone from the net.

After another half hour's effort, Paynter had occasion to remark, "It must have been a rather large dog." There was already a heap of such white fragments at his feet.

"I have seen nothing yet," said Ashe, speaking more plainly, "that is certainly a human bone."

"I fancy this must be a human bone," said the American.

And he turned away a little, as he handed the other a skull.

There was no doubt of what sort of skull. There was the one unique curve that holds the mystery of reason, and underneath it the two black holes that had held human eyes. But just above

that on the left was another and smaller black hole, which was not an eye.

Then the lawyer said, with something like an effort:

"We may admit it is a man without admitting it is—any particular man. There may be something, after all, in that yarn about the drunkard. He may have tumbled into the well. Under certain conditions—after certain natural processes, I fancy—the bones might be stripped in this way, even without the skill of any assassin. We want the doctor again."

Then he added suddenly, and the very sound of his voice suggested that he hardly believed his own words:

"Haven't you got poor Vane's hat there?"

He took it from the silent American's hand, and with a sort of hurry, fitted it on the bony head.

"Don't!" said the other involuntarily.

The lawyer had put his finger, as the doctor had done, through the hole in the hat, and it lay exactly over the hole in the skull.

"I have the better right to shrink," he said steadily, but in a vibrant voice. "I think I am the older friend."

Paynter nodded without speech, accepting the final identification. The last doubt, or hope, had departed. He turned to the dragging apparatus, and did not speak till he had made his last find.

The singing of the birds seemed to grow louder about them, and the dance of the green summer leaves was repeated beyond in the dance of the green summer sea. Only the great roots of the mysterious trees could be seen, the rest being far aloft, and all round it was a wood of little, lively, and happy things. They might have been too innocent naturalists, or even two children fishing for efts or tittlebats on that summer holiday, when Paynter pulled up something that weighed in the net more heavily than any bone. It nearly

broke the meshes, and fell against a mossy stone with a clang.

"Truth lies at the bottom of a well!" cried the American, with a lift in his voice. "The woodman's ax!"

It lay indeed, flat and gleaming, in the grasses by the well in the wood, just as it had lain in the thicket where the woodman had thrown it in the beginning of all these things. But on one corner of the bright blade was a dull-brown stain.

"I see," said Ashe. "The woodman's ax, and therefore the woodman. Your deductions are rapid."

"My deductions are reasonable," said Paynter. "Look here, Mr. Ashe, I know what you're thinking. I know you distrust Treherne, but I'm sure you will be just, for all that. To begin with, surely the first assumption is that the woodman's ax was used by the woodman. What have you to say to it?"

"I say no to it," replied the lawyer. "The last weapon a woodman would use would be a woodman's ax, if he is a sane man."

"He isn't," said Paynter quietly. "You said you wanted the doctor's opinion just now. The doctor's opinion on this point is the same as my own. We both found him maundering about outside there. It's obvious this business has gone to his head, at any rate. If the murderer were a man of business like yourself, what you say might be sound. But this murderer is a mystic. He was driven by some fanatical fad about the trees. It's quite likely he thought there was something solemn and sacrificial about the ax, and would have liked to cut off Vane's head before a crowd, like Charles I.'s. He's looking for the ax still, and probably thinks it a holy relic."

"For which reason," said Ashe, smiling, "he instantly chucked it down a well."

Paynter laughed.

"You have me there certainly," he said. "But I think you have something else in your mind. You'll say, I suppose, that we were all watching the wood, but were we? Frankly, I could almost fancy the peacock trees did strike me with a sort of sickness, a sleeping sickness."

"Well," admitted Ashe, "you have me there, too. I'm afraid I couldn't swear I was awake all the time, but I don't put it down to magic trees—only to a private hobby of going to bed at night. But look here, Mr. Paynter, there's another and better argument against any outsider from the village or countryside having committed the crime. Granted he might have slipped past us somehow and gone for the squire. But why should he go for him in the wood? How did he know he was in the wood? You remember how suddenly the poor old boy bolted into it—on what a momentary impulse. It's the last place where one would normally look for such a man in the middle of the night. No, it's an ugly thing to say, but we, the group round that garden table, were the only people who knew. Which brings me back to the one point in your remarks that I happen to think perfectly true."

"What was that?" inquired the other.

"That the murderer was a mystic," said Ashe, "but a cleverer mystic than poor old Martin."

Paynter made a murmur of protest, and then fell silent.

"Let us talk plainly," resumed the lawyer. "Treherne had all those mad motives you yourself admit against the woodcutter. He had the knowledge of Vane's whereabouts, which nobody can possibly attribute to the woodcutter. But he had much more. Who taunted and goaded the squire to go into the wood at all? Treherne. Who practically prophesied, like an infernal quack astrologer, that something would

happen to him if he did go into the wood? Treherne. Who was, for some reason, no matter what, obviously burning with rage and restlessness all that night, kicking his legs impatiently to and fro on the cliff and breaking out with wild words about it being all over soon? Treherne. And on top of all this, when I walked closer to the wood, whom did I see slip out of it swiftly and silently like a shadow, but turning his face once to the moon? On my oath and on my honor, Treherne."

"It is awful," said Paynter, like a man stunned. "What you say is simply awful."

"Yes," said Ashe seriously, "very awful, but very simple. Treherne knew where the ax was originally thrown. I saw him, on that day he lunched here first, watching it like a wolf, while Miss Vane was talking to him. On that dreadful night, he could easily have picked it up as he went into the wood. He knew about the well, no doubt. Who was so likely to know any old traditions round the peacock trees? He hid the hat in the tree, where perhaps he hoped—though the point is unimportant—that nobody would dare to look. Anyhow, he hid it, simply because—it was the one thing that would not sink in the well. Mr. Paynter, do you think I would say this of any man in mere mean dislike? Could any man say it of any man, unless the case were complete, as this is complete?"

"It is complete," said Paynter, very pale. "I have nothing left against it but a faint irrational feeling—a feeling that, somehow or other, if poor Vane could stand alive before us at this moment, he might tell some other and even more incredible tale."

Ashe made a mournful gesture.

"Can these dry bones live?" he said.

"Lord, Thou knowest," answered the other mechanically. "Even these dry bones——"

And he stopped suddenly with his mouth open, a blinding light of wonder in his pale eyes.

"See here," he said, hoarsely and hastily. "You have said the word. What does it mean? What can it mean? Why? Why are these bones dry?"

The lawyer started and stared down at the heap.

"Your case complete!" cried Paynter, in mounting excitement. "Where is the water in the well? The water I saw leap up like a flame? Why did it leap? Where is it gone to? Complete! We are buried under riddles!"

Ashe stooped, picked up a bone, and looked at it.

"You are right," he said, in a low and shaken voice. "This bone is as dry—as a bone."

"Yes, I am right," replied Cyprian. "And your mystic is still as mysterious—as a mystic."

There was a long silence. Ashe laid down the bone, picked up the ax, and studied it more closely. Beyond the dull stain at the corner of the steel, there was nothing unusual about it, save a broad white rag wrapped round the handle, perhaps to give a better grip. The lawyer thought it worth noting, however, that the rag was certainly newer and cleaner than the chopper. But both were quite dry.

"Mr. Paynter," he said at last, "I admit you have scored, in the spirit if not the letter. In strict logic, this greater puzzle is not a reply to my case. If this ax has not been dipped in water, it has been dipped in blood. And the water jumping out of the well is not an explanation of the poet jumping out of the wood. But I admit that morally and practically it does make a vital difference. We are now faced with a colossal contradiction, and we don't know how far it extends."

"The body might have been broken up or boiled down to its bones by the

murderer, though it may be hard to connect it with the conditions of the murder. It might conceivably have been so reduced by some property in the water and soil, for decomposition varies vastly with these things. I should not dismiss my strong *prima-facie* case against the likely person because of these difficulties. But here we have something entirely different. That the bones themselves should remain dry in a well full of water, or a well that yesterday was full of water—that brings us to the edge of something beyond which we can make no guess. There is a new factor, enormous and quite unknown. While we can't fit together such prodigious facts, we can't fit together a case against Treherne, or against anybody.

"No; there is only one thing to be done now. Since we can't accuse Treherne, we must appeal to him. We must put the case against him frankly before him, and trust that he has an explanation—and will give it. I suggest that we go back and do it now."

Paynter, beginning to follow, hesitated a moment and then said:

"Forgive me for a kind of liberty. As you say, you are an older friend of the family. I entirely agree with your suggestion, but before you act on your present suspicions, do you know, I think Miss Vane ought to be warned a little? I rather fear all this will be a new shock to her, but it need not be too sudden."

"Very well," said Ashe, after looking at him steadily for an instant. "Let us go across to her first."

From the opening of the wood, they could see Barbara Vane writing at the garden table, which was littered with correspondence, and the butler with his yellow face waiting behind her chair. As the lengths of grass lessened between them, and the little group at the table grew larger and clearer in the sunlight, Paynter had a painful sense

of being part of an embassy of doom. It sharpened when the girl looked up from the table and smiled on seeing them.

"I should like to speak to you rather particularly if I may," said the lawyer, with a touch of authority in his respect; and when the butler was dismissed, he laid open the whole matter before her, speaking sympathetically, but leaving out nothing, from the strange escape of the poet from the wood to the last detail of the dry bones out of the well. No fault could be found with any one of his tones or phrases, and yet Cyprian, tingling in every nerve with the fine delicacy of his notion about the other sex, felt as if she were faced with an inquisitor. He stood about uneasily, watched the few colored clouds in the clear sky and the bright birds darting about the wood, and heartily wished himself up the tree again.

Soon, however, the way the girl took it began to move him to perplexity rather than pity. It was like nothing he had expected, and yet he could not name the shade of difference. The final identification of her father's skull, by the hole in the hat, turned her a little pale, but left her composed. This was perhaps explicable, since she had from the first taken the pessimistic view. But during the rest of the tale, there rested on her broad brows under her copper coils of hair a brooding spirit that was itself a mystery. He could only tell himself that she was less merely receptive, either firmly or weakly, than he would have expected. It was as if she revolved, not their problem, but her own. She was silent a long time, and said at last:

"Thank you, Mr. Ashe. I am really very grateful for this. After all, it brings things to the point where they must have come sooner or later." She looked dreamily at the wood and the sea, and went on: "I've not only had myself to consider, you see, but if



you're really thinking *that*, it's time I spoke out, without asking anybody. You say, as if it were something very dreadful, Mr. Treherne was in the wood that night. Well, it's not quite so dreadful to me, you see, because I know he was. In fact, we were there together."

"Together!" repeated the lawyer.

"We were together," she said quietly, "because we had a right to be together."

"Do you mean," stammered Ashe, surprised out of himself, "that you were engaged?"

"Oh, no," she said. "We were married."

Then, amid a startled silence, she added as a kind of afterthought:

"In fact, we are still."

Strong as was his composure, the lawyer sat back in his chair with a sort of solid stupefaction, at which Paynter could not help smiling.

"You will ask me, of course," went on Barbara, in the same measured manner, "why we should have been married secretly, so that even my poor father did not know. Well, I answer you quite frankly to begin with—because, if he had known, he would certainly have cut me off with a shilling. He did not like my husband, and I rather fancy you don't like him, either. And when I tell you this, I know perfectly well what you will say—the usual adventurer getting hold of the usual heiress. It is quite reasonable, and, as it happens, it is quite wrong. If I had deceived my father for the sake of money, or even for the sake of a man, I should be a little ashamed to talk to you about it. And I think you can see that I am not ashamed."

"Yes," said the American, with a grave inclination. "I can see that."

She looked at him thoughtfully a moment, as if seeking words for an obscure matter, and then said:

"Do you remember, Mr. Paynter,

that day you first lunched here and told us about the African trees? Well, it was my birthday—I mean my first birthday. I was born then, or woke up, or something. I had walked in this garden like a somnambulist in the sun. I think there are many such somnambulists in our set and our society—stunned with health, drugged with good manners, fitting their surroundings too well to be alive. Well, I came alive somehow, and you know how deep in us are the things we first realized when we were babies and began to take notice. I began to take notice.

"One of the first things I noticed was your own story, Mr. Paynter. I feel as if I had heard of St. Securis as children hear of Santa Claus, and as if that big tree there were a bogey I still believed in. For I do still believe in such things, or rather I believe in them more and more. I feel certain my poor father drove on the rocks by disbelieving, and you are all racing to ruin after him. That is why I do honestly want the estate, and that is why I am not ashamed of wanting it.

"I am perfectly certain, Mr. Paynter, that nobody can save this perishing land and this perishing people but those who understand—I mean who understand a thousand little signs and guides in the very soil and lay of the land and tracks that are almost trampled out. My husband understands, and I have begun to understand; my father would never have understood. There are powers, there is the spirit of a place, there are presences that are not to be put by. Oh, don't fancy I am sentimental and hanker after the good old days. The old days were not all good—that is just the point—and we must understand enough to know the good from the evil. We must understand enough to save the traces of a saint or a sacred tradition, or, where a wicked god has been worshiped, to destroy his altar and cut down his grove."



"His grove," said Paynter automatically, and looked to the little wood, where the sun-bright birds were flying.

"Mrs. Treherne," said Ashe, with a formidable quietness, "I am not so unsympathetic with all this as you may suppose. I will not even say it is all moonshine, for it is something better. It is, if I may say so, honeymoonshine. I will never deny the saying that it makes the world go round, if it makes people's heads go round, too. But there are other sentiments, madam, and other duties. I need not tell you that your father was a good man, and that what has befallen him would be pitiable even as the fate of the wicked. This is a horrible thing, and it is chiefly among horrors that we must keep our common sense. There are seasons for everything, and when my old friend lies butchered, do not come to me with even the most beautiful fairy tales about a saint and his enchanted grove."

"Well, and you," she cried, and rose radiantly and swiftly, "with what kind of fairy tales do you come to me? In what enchanted groves are *you* walking? You come and tell me that Mr. Paynter found a well where the water danced and then disappeared, but of course miracles are all moonshine! You tell me you yourself fished bones from under the same water, and every bone was as dry as a dry biscuit, but for Heaven's sake let us say nothing that makes anybody's head go round! Really, Mr. Ashe, you must try to preserve your common sense!"

She was smiling, but with blazing eyes, and Ashe got to his feet with an involuntary laugh of surrender.

"Well, we must be going," he said. "May I say that a tribute is really due to your new transcendental training? If I may say so, I always knew you had brains, and you've certainly been learning to use them."

The two amateur detectives went back to the wood for the moment, that

Ashe might consider the removal of the unhappy squire's remains. As he pointed out, it was now legally possible to have an inquest and, even at that early stage of investigations, he was in favor of having it at once.

"I shall be the coroner," he said, "and I think it will be a case of 'some person or persons unknown.' Don't be surprised. It is often done to give the guilty a false security. This is not the first time the police have found it convenient to have the inquest first and the inquiry afterward."

But Paynter had paid little attention to the point, for his great gift of enthusiasm, long wasted on arts and affectations, was lifted to inspiration by the romance of real life into which he had just walked. He was really a great critic; he had a genius for admiration, and his admiration varied fittingly with everything he admired.

"A splendid girl and a splendid story!" he cried. "I feel as if I were in love again myself, not so much with her as with Eve or Helen of Troy or some tower of beauty in the morning of the world. Don't you love all heroic things—that gravity and great candor, and the way she took one step from a sort of throne to stand in a wilderness with a vagabond? Oh, believe me, it is she who is the poet! She has the higher reason, and honor and valor are at rest in her soul."

"In short, she is uncommonly pretty," replied Ashe, with some cynicism. "I knew a murderess rather well who was very much like her and had just that colored hair."

"You talk as if a murderer could be caught red-haired instead of red-handed," retorted Paynter. "Why, at this very minute, you could be caught red-haired yourself. Are you a murderer, by any chance?"

Ashe looked up quickly, and then smiled.

"I'm afraid I'm a connoisseur in

murderers, as you are in poets," he answered, "and I assure you they are of all colors in hair as well as in temperament. I suppose it's inhuman, but mine is a monstrously interesting trade, even in a little place like this. As for that girl, of course I've known her all her life and—— But that is just the question. Have I known her all her life? Have I known her at all? Was she even there to be known? You admire her for telling the truth, and so she did, by God, when she said that some people wake up late who have never lived before. Do we know what they might do—we, who have only seen them asleep?"

"Great heavens!" cried Paynter. "You surely don't dare suggest that she——"

"No, I don't," said the lawyer, with composure, "but there are other reasons—— I don't suggest anything fully till we've had our interview with this poet of yours. I think I know where to find him."

They found him, in fact, before they expected him, sitting on the bench beside the Vane Arms, drinking a mug of cider and waiting for the return of his American friend; so it was not difficult to open conversation with him. Nor did he in any way avoid the subject of the tragedy, and the lawyer, seating himself also on the long bench that fronted the little market place, was soon putting the last developments as lucidly as he had put them to Barbara, including, of course, her own admission of the actual state of things.

"Well," said Treherne at last, leaning back and frowning at the signboard with the colored birds and dolphins, just above his head, "suppose somebody did kill the squire. He'd killed a good many people with his hygiene and his enlightened landlordism."

Paynter was considerably uneasy at this alarming opening, but the poet went on quite coolly, with his hands in

his pockets and his feet thrust out into the street:

"When a man has the power of a sultan in Turkey and uses it with the ideas of a spinster in Tooting, I often wonder that nobody puts a knife in him. I wish there were more sympathy for murderers, somehow. I'm very sorry the poor old fellow's gone, myself, but you gentlemen always seem to forget there are any other people in the world. He's all right. He was a good fellow, and his soul, I fancy, has gone to the happiest paradise of all."

The anxious American could read nothing of the effect of this in the dark Napoleonic face of the lawyer, who merely said:

"What do you mean?"

"The fool's paradise," said Treherne, and drained his pot of cider.

The lawyer rose. He did not look at Treherne or speak to him, but looked and spoke straight across him to the American, who found the utterance not a little unexpected.

"Mr. Paynter," said Ashe, "you thought it rather morbid of me to collect murderers, but it's fortunate for your own view of the case that I do. It may surprise you to know that Mr. Treherne has now, in my eyes, entirely cleared himself of suspicion. I have been intimate with several assassins, as I remarked, but there's one thing none of them ever did. I never knew a murderer talk about the murder, and then at once deny it and defend it. No, if a man is concealing his crime, why should he go out of his way to apologize for it?"

"Well," said Paynter, with his ready appreciation, "I always said you were a remarkable man, and that's certainly a remarkable idea."

"Do I understand," asked the poet, kicking his heels on the cobbles, "that both you gentlemen have been kindly directing me toward the gallows?"

"No," never the supposing I should be guilty to been for some worthier all, I sup like great world ha of his sin admits ye say I have

The po "Well, enough," a guess a of the de no more And by and he tu critic, "I ing me done, an if I diff the mora it is a it a fall be lawle For he can take could pi off to el carried crime to red sun a murd men.

"No, you sit some w robs be taste it compass thieves, der to h me stea I can sh El Dor

"No," said Paynter thoughtfully, "I never thought you guilty; and even supposing I had, if you understand me, I should never have thought it quite so guilty to be guilty. It would not have been for money or any mean thing, but for something a little wilder and worthier of a man of genius. After all, I suppose, the poet has passions like great unearthly appetites, and the world has always judged more gently of his sins. But now that Mr. Ashe admits your innocence, I can honestly say I have always affirmed it."

The poet rose also.

"Well, I am innocent, oddly enough," he said. "I think I can make a guess about your vanishing well. But of the death and the dry bones I know no more than the dead—if so much. And by the way, my dear Paynter," and he turned two bright eyes on the art critic, "I will excuse you from excusing me from all the things I haven't done, and you, I hope, will excuse me if I differ from you altogether about the morality of poets. As you suggest, it is a fashionable view, but I think it a fallacy. No man has less right to be lawless than a man of imagination. For he has spiritual adventures, and can take his holidays when he likes. I could picture the poor squire carried off to elfland whenever I wanted him carried off. And that wood-needed no crime to make it wicked for me. That red sunset the other night was all that a murder would have been to many men.

"No, Mr. Ashe. Show, when next you sit in judgment, a little mercy to some wretched man who drinks and robs because he must drink beer to taste it and take it to drink it. Have compassion on the next batch of poor thieves, who have to hold things in order to have them. But if ever you find me stealing one small farthing, when I can shut my eyes and see the city of El Dorado, then," and he lifted his head

like a falcon, "show me no mercy, for I shall deserve none."

"Well," remarked Ashe, after a pause, "I must go and fix things up for the inquest. Mr. Treherne, your attitude is singularly interesting. I really almost wish I could add you to my collection of murderers. They are a varied and very extraordinary set."

"Has it ever occurred to you," asked Paynter, "that perhaps the men who have never committed murder are a varied and very extraordinary set? Perhaps every plain man's life holds the real mystery, the secret of sins avoided."

"Possibly," replied Ashe. "It would be a long business to stop the next man in the street and ask him what crimes he never committed, and why not. And I happen to be busy, so you'll excuse me. Good morning."

"What," asked the American, when he and the poet were alone, "is this guess of yours about the vanishing water?"

"Well, I'm not sure I'll tell you yet," answered Treherne, something of the old mischief coming back into his dark eyes. "But I'll tell you something else, which may be connected with it—something I couldn't tell until my wife had told you about our meeting in the wood." His face had grown grave again, and he resumed, after a momentary pause:

"When my wife started to follow her father, I advised her to go back first to the house, to leave it by another door, and to meet me in the wood in half an hour. We often made these assignments, of course, and generally thought them great fun, but this time the question was serious, and I didn't want the wrong thing done in a hurry. It was a question whether anything could be done to undo an experiment we both vaguely felt to be dangerous; and she especially thought, after reflection, that

interference would make things worse. She thought the old sportsman, having been dared to do something, would certainly not be dissuaded by the very man who had dared him, or by a woman whom he regarded as a child.

"She left me at last in a sort of despair, but I lingered with a last hope of doing something and drew doubtfully near to the heart of the wood; and there, instead of the silence I expected, I heard a voice. It seemed as if the squire must be talking to himself, and I had the unpleasant fancy that he had already lost his reason in that wood of witchcraft. But I soon found that if he was talking, he was talking with two voices.

"Other fancies attacked me, as that the other was the voice of the tree, or the voices of the three trees talking together, and with no man near. But it was not the voice of the tree. The next moment, I knew the voice, for I had heard it twenty times across the table. It was the voice of that doctor of yours. I heard it as certainly as you hear my voice now."

After a moment's silence, he resumed:

"I left the wood, I hardly knew why, and with wild and bewildered feelings. And as I came out into the faint moonshine, I saw that old lawyer standing quietly, but staring at me like an owl. At least the light touched his red hair with fire, but his square old face was in shadow. But I knew, if I could have read it, that it was the face of a hanging judge."

He threw himself on the bench again, smiled a little, and added:

"Only—like a good many hanging judges, I fancy—he was waiting to hang the wrong man."

"And the right man——" said Paynter mechanically.

Treherne shrugged his shoulders, sprawling on the ale bench, and played with his empty pot.

## CHAPTER IV.

Some time after the inquest, which had ended in the inconclusive verdict which Mr. Andrew Ashe, the coroner, had himself predicted and achieved, Paynter was again sitting on the bench outside his village inn, having on the little table in front of it a tall glass of light ale, which he enjoyed much more as local color than as liquor. He had but one companion on the bench, and that a new one, for the little market place was empty at that hour and he had lately, for the rest, been much alone.

He was not unhappy, for he resembled his great countryman, Walt Whitman, in carrying a kind of universe with him like an open umbrella, but he was not only alone, but lonely. For Ashe had gone abruptly up to London, and since his return, had been occupied obscurely with legal matters, doubtless bearing on the murder. And Treherne had long since taken up his position openly at the great house as the husband of the great lady, and he and she were occupied with sweeping reforms on the estate. The lady especially, being of the sort whose very dreams "drive at practice," was landscape gardening as with the gestures of a giantess. It was natural, therefore, that so sociable a spirit as Paynter should fall into speech with the one other stranger who happened to be staying at the inn, evidently a bird of passage like himself.

This man, who was smoking a pipe on the bench beside him, with his knapsack before him on the table, was an artist come to sketch on that romantic coast—a tall man in a velvet jacket, with a shock of tow-colored hair and a long, fair beard, but eyes of a dark brown, the effect of which contrast reminded Paynter vaguely, he hardly knew why, of a Russian. The stranger carried his knapsack into

many picturesque corners; he obtained permission to set up his easel in that high garden where the late squire had held his alfresco banquets. But Paynter had never had the opportunity of judging of the artist's work, nor did he find it easy to get the artist even to talk of his art.

Cyprian himself was always ready to talk of any art, and he talked of it excellently, but with little response. He gave his own reasons for preferring the Cubists to the cult of Picasso, but his new friend seemed to have but a faint interest in either. He insinuated that perhaps the Neo-Primitives were, after all, only thinning their line, while the true Primitives were rather tightening it, but the stranger seemed to receive the insinuation without any marked reaction of feeling. When Paynter had even gone back as far into the past as the Post-Impressionists to find a common ground, and had not found it, other memories began to creep back into his mind. He was just reflecting, rather darkly, that after all the tale of the peacock trees needed a mysterious stranger to round it off, and that this man had much the air of being one, when the mysterious stranger himself said suddenly:

"Well, I think I'd better show you the work I'm doing down here."

He had his knapsack before him on the table, and he smiled rather grimly as he began to unstrap it. Paynter looked on with polite expressions of interest, but was considerably surprised when the artist unpacked and placed on the table, not any recognizable works of art, even of the most Cubist description, but, first, a quire of foolscap closely written with notes in black and red ink; and, second, to the American's extreme amazement, the old woodman's ax with the linen wrapper which he had himself found in the well long ago.

"Sorry to give you a start, sir," said the Russian artist with a marked Lon-

don accent. "But I'd better explain straight off that I'm a policeman."

"You don't look it," said Paynter, staring.

"I'm not supposed to," replied the other. "Mr. Ashe brought me down here from the Yard to investigate, but he told me to report to you when I'd got anything to go on. Would you like to go into the matter now?"

Surprised as he was, the American was too courteous not to make an effort to efface his somewhat unfortunate curiosity about his companion's Cubism by following him onto a ground more his own; and he willingly expressed his agreement.

"When I took this matter up," explained the detective, "I did it at Mr. Ashe's request, and largely, of course, on Mr. Ashe's lines. Mr. Ashe is a great criminal lawyer, with a beautiful brain, sir, as full as the Newgate Calendar. I took, as a working notion, his view that only you five gentlemen round the table in the squire's garden were acquainted with the squire's movements. But you gentlemen, if I may say so, have a way of forgetting certain other things and other people which we are rather taught to look for first. And as I followed Mr. Ashe's inquiries through the stages you know already, through certain suspicions I needn't discuss because they've been dropped, I found the thing shaping after all toward something, in the end, which I think we should have considered at the beginning. Now, to begin with, it isn't true that there were five men round the table. There were six."

The creepy conditions of that garden vigil vaguely returned upon Paynter, and he thought of a ghost or something more nameless than a ghost. But the deliberate speech of the detective soon enlightened him.

"There were six men and five gentlemen, if you like to put it so," he proceeded. "That man Miles, the butler,

saw the squire vanish as plainly as you did, and I soon found that Miles was a man worthy of a good deal of attention."

A light of understanding dawned on Paynter's face.

"So that was it, was it?" he muttered. "Does all our mythological mystery end with a policeman collaring a butler? Well, I agree with you he is far from an ordinary butler, even to look at, and the fault in imagination is mine. Like many faults in imagination, it was simply snobbishness. I ought to have remembered, when I looked at him, what some poet says about the yellow face of doom."

"We don't go quite so fast as that," observed the officer in an impassive manner. "I only said I found the inquiry pointing to Miles, and that he was well worthy of attention. He was much more in the old squire's confidence than many people supposed, and when I cross-examined him, he told me a good deal that was worth knowing. I've got it all down in these notes here, but at the moment I'll only trouble you with one detail of it."

"One night this butler was just outside the squire's dining-room door when he heard the noise of a violent quarrel. The squire was a violent gentleman from time to time, but the curious thing about this scene was that the other gentleman was the more violent of the two. Miles heard him say repeatedly that the squire was a public nuisance, and that his death would be a good riddance for everybody. I only stop now to tell you that the other gentleman was Doctor Burton-Brown, the medical man of this village, and I pass on to the next item."

Paynter opened his mouth as if to speak, but the detective continued, merely turning over another leaf of his notes:

"The next examination I made was that of Martin, the woodcutter. Upon

one point at least, his evidence is quite clear, and is, as you will see, largely confirmed by other witnesses. He says first that the doctor prevented him from recovering his ax, and this is corroborated by Mr. and Mrs. Treherne. But he says further that the doctor admitted having the thing himself, and this again finds support in other evidence by the gardener, who saw the doctor, some time afterward, come by himself and picked up the chopper. Martin says that Doctor Brown repeatedly refused to give it up, alleging some fanciful excuse every time. And finally, Mr. Paynter, we will hear the evidence of the ax itself."

He laid the woodman's tool on the table in front of him, and began to rip up and unwrap the curious linen covering round the handle.

"You will admit this is an odd bandage," he said. "And that's just the odd thing about it—that it really is a bandage. This white stuff is the sort of lint they use in hospitals, cut into strips like this. But most doctors keep some, and I have the evidence of Jake the fisherman, with whom Doctor Brown lived for some time, that the doctor had this useful habit. And, last," he added, flattening out a corner of the rag on the table, "isn't it odd that it should be marked 'T. B. B.'?"

The American gazed at the rudely inked initials, but hardly saw them. What he saw, as in a mirror in his darkened memory, was the black figure with the black gloves against the blood-red sunset, as he had seen it when he had come out of the wood. It had always haunted him, he knew not why.

"Of course I see what you mean," he said, "and it's very painful for me, for I knew and respected the man. But surely, also, it's very far from explaining everything. If he is a murderer, is he a magician? Why did the well water all evaporate in a night and leave the dead man's bones dry as dust?"



That's not a common operation in the hospitals, is it?"

"As to the water, we do know the explanation," said the detective. "I didn't tumble to it at first myself, being a cockney, but a little talk with Jake and the other fishermen about the old smuggling days put me straight about that. But I admit the dried remains still stump us all. All the same I——"

A shadow fell across the table, and his talk was sharply cut short. Ashe was standing under the painted sign, buttoned up grimly in black, and with the face of the hanging judge, of which the poet had spoken, plain this time in the broad sunlight.

"We must move at once," said the lawyer. "Doctor Burton-Brown is leaving the village."

The tall detective sprang to his feet, and Paynter instinctively imitated him.

"He has gone up to the Trehermes', possibly to say good-by," went on Ashe rapidly. "I'm sorry, but we must arrest him in the garden there, if necessary. I've kept the lady out of the way, I think. But you," addressing the factitious landscape painter, "must go up at once and rig up that easel of yours near the table and be ready. We will follow quietly, and come up behind the tree. We must be careful, for it's clear he's got wind of us, or he wouldn't be doing a bolt."

"I don't like this job," remarked Paynter, as they mounted toward the park and garden, the detective darting on ahead.

"Do you suppose I do?" asked Ashe, and indeed his strong, heavy face looked so lined and old, that the red hair seemed unnatural, like a red wig. "I've known him longer than you, though perhaps I've suspected him longer, as well."

When they topped the slope of the garden, the detective had already erected his easel, though a strong breeze

blowing toward the sea rattled and flapped his apparatus and blew about his fair—and false—beard in the wind. Little clouds, curled like feathers, were scudding seaward across the many-colored landscape which the American art critic had once surveyed on a happier morning, but it is doubtful whether the landscape painter paid much attention to it.

Treherne was dimly discernible on the doorstep of what was now his house. He would come no nearer, for he hated such a public duty more bitterly than the rest. The others posted themselves a little way behind the tree. Between the lines of these masked batteries, the black figure of the doctor could be seen coming across the green lawn, traveling upright as a bullet, as he had done when he had brought the bad news to the woodcutter. To-day he was smiling under the dark mustache that was cut short of the upper lip, though they fancied him a little pale, and he seemed to pause a moment and peer through his spectacles at the artist.

The artist turned from his easel with a natural movement, and then in a flash had captured the doctor by the coat collar.

"I arrest you——" he began, but Brown plucked himself free with startling promptitude, took a flying leap at the other, tore off his sham beard, tossing it into the air like one of the wild wisps of cloud, and then, with one wild kick, sent the easel flying topsy-turvy and fled like a hare for the shore.

Even at that dazzling instant, Paynter felt that this wild reception was a novelty and almost an anticlimax. But he had no time for analysis, when he and the whole pack had to follow in the hunt, even Treherne bringing up the rear with a renewed curiosity and energy.

The fugitive collided with one of the policemen who ran to head him off, sending him sprawling down the slope.

Indeed the fugitive seemed inspired with the strength of a wild ape. He cleared at a bound the rampart of flowers over which Barbara had once leaned to look at her future lover, and tumbled with blinding speed down the steep path up which that troubadour had climbed. Racing with the rushing wind, they all streamed across the garden after him, down the path, and finally onto the seashore by the fisher's cot and the pierced crags and caverns the American had admired when he had first landed. The runaway did not, however, make for the house he had long inhabited, but rather for the pier, as if with a mind to seize the boat or to swim. Only when he reached the other end of the small stone jetty did he turn and show them the pale face with the spectacles, and they saw that it was still smiling.

"I'm rather glad of this," said Treherne, with a great sigh. "The man is mad."

Nevertheless, the naturalness of the doctor's voice, when he spoke, startled them almost as much as a shriek.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I won't protract your painful duties by asking you what you want, but I will ask at once for a small favor, which will not prejudice those duties in any way. I came down here rather in a hurry, perhaps, but the truth is I thought I was late for an appointment." He looked dispassionately at his watch. "I find there is still some fifteen minutes. Will you wait with me here for that short time? After which, I am quite at your service."

There was a bewildered silence, and then Paynter said:

"For my part, I feel as if it would really be better to humor him, somehow."

"Ashe," said the doctor, with a new note of seriousness, "for old friendship, grant me this last little indulgence. It will make no difference.

I have no arms or means of escape. You can search me, if you like. I know you think you are doing right, and I also know you will do it as fairly as you can. Well, after all, you get friends to help you. Look at our friend with the beard, or the remains of the beard. Why shouldn't I have a friend to help me? A man will be here in a few minutes in whom I put some confidence—a great authority on these things. Why not, if only out of curiosity, wait and hear his view of the case?"

"This seems all moonshine," said Ashe, "but on the chance of any new light on things, even from the moon, I don't mind waiting a quarter of an hour. Who is this friend, I wonder. Some amateur detective, I suppose."

"I thank you," said the doctor, with some dignity. "I think you will trust him when you have talked to him a little. And now," he added, with an air of amiably relaxing into lighter matters, "let us talk about the murder."

He strolled back onto the beach among them, and there was something very uncanny in the contrast between his new manner and theirs, he walking and talking as if among friends at a club, they spreading out to surround him and yet automatically giving place to him, as if they held a demoniac or a mad dog.

At last, under their anxious eyes, he seated himself on a sea-worn rock, crossed his legs, and began to talk almost with the absurd air of a professor condescending to his class.

"This case," he said in a detached manner, "will be found, I suspect, to be rather unique. There is a very clear and conclusive combination of evidence against Thomas Burton-Brown, otherwise myself. But there is one peculiarity about that evidence which you may perhaps have noticed. It all comes ultimately from one source, and that a rather unusual one. Thus, the wood-

cutter says I had his ax, but what makes him think so? He says that I told him I had his ax, that I told him so again and again. Once more, Mr. Paynter, here, pulled the ax up out of the well, but how? I think Mr. Paynter will testify that I brought him the tackle for fishing it up, tackle he might never have got in any other way. Curious, is it not? Again, the ax is found to be wrapped in lint that was in my possession, according to the fisherman. But who showed the lint to the fisherman? I did. Who marked it with large letters as mine? I did. Who wrapped it round the handle at all? I did. Rather a singular thing to do. Has any one ever explained it?"

His words, which had been heard at first with painful coldness, were beginning to hold more and more of their attention. Ashe especially was listening quietly, but with an entirely new expression.

"Then there is the well itself," proceeded the doctor, with the same air of insane calm. "I suppose some of you by this time know at least the secret of that. The secret of the well is simply that it is not a well. It is purposely shaped at the top so as to look like one, but it is really a sort of chimney, opening from the roof of one of those caves over there, a cave that runs inland just under the wood and, indeed, is connected by tunnels and secret passages with other openings miles and miles away. It is a sort of labyrinth used by smugglers and such people for ages past. This doubtless explains many of those disappearances we have heard of. But to return to the well that is not a well, in case some of you still don't know about it. When the sea rises very high at certain seasons, it fills the low cave and even rises a little way in the funnel above, making it look more like a well than ever. The noise Mr. Paynter heard was the natural eddy of a breaker from outside,

and the whole experience depended on something as elementary as the tide."

The American was startled into ordinary speech.

"The tide!" he said. "And I never even thought of it! I guess that comes of living by the Mediterranean."

"The next step will be obvious enough," continued the speaker, "to a logical mind like that of Mr. Ashe, for instance. If it be asked why, even so, the tide did not wash away the squire's remains that had lain there since his disappearance, there is only one possible answer. The remains had *not* lain there since his disappearance. The remains had been deliberately put there, in the cavern under the wood, and put there *after* Mr. Paynter had made his first investigation. They were put there, in short, after the sea had retreated and the cave was again dry. That is why they were dry; of course, much drier than the cave. Who put them there, I wonder."

He was gazing gravely through his spectacles over their heads into vacancy, and suddenly he smiled.

"Ah!" he cried, jumping up from the rock with alacrity. "Here is the amateur detective at last!"

Ashe turned his head over his shoulder, and for a few seconds did not move it again, but stood as if with a stiff neck. In the cliff just behind him was one of the clefts or cracks into which it was everywhere cloven. Advancing from this into the sunshine, as if from a narrow door, was Squire Vane, with a broad smile on his face.

The wind was tearing from the top of the high cliff out to sea, passing over their heads, and they had the sensation that everything was passing over their heads and out of their control. Paynter felt as if his head had been blown off like a hat. But none of this gale of unreason seemed to stir a hair on the white head of the squire, whose bearing, though self-important and bor-

dering on a swagger, seemed, if anything, more comfortable than in the old days. His red face was, however, burned like a sailor's, and his light clothes had a foreign look.

"Well, gentlemen," he said genially, "so this is the end of the legend of the peacock trees. Sorry to spoil that delightful traveler's tale, Mr. Paynter, but the joke couldn't be kept up forever. Sorry to put a stop to your best poem, Mr. Treherne, but I thought all this poetry had been going a little too far. So Doctor Brown and I fixed up a little surprise for you. And I must say, without vanity, that you look a little surprised."

"What on earth," asked Ashe at last, "is the meaning of all this?"

The squire laughed pleasantly, and even a little apologetically.

"I'm afraid I'm fond of practical jokes," he said, "and this, I suppose, is my last grand practical joke. But I want you to understand that the joke is really practical. I flatter myself it will be of very practical use to the cause of progress and common sense and the killing of such silly superstitions everywhere. The best part of it, I admit, was the doctor's idea and not mine. All I meant to do was to pass a night in the trees, and then turn up as fresh as paint to tell you what fools you were. But Doctor Brown, here, followed me into the wood, and we had a little conversation which rather changed my plans.

"He told me that a disappearance for a few hours like that would never knock the nonsense on the head. Most people would never even hear of it, and those who did would say that one night proved nothing. He showed me a much better way, which had been tried in several cases where bogus miracles had been shown up. The thing to do was to get the thing really believed everywhere as a miracle, and then shown up everywhere as a sham

miracle. I can't put all the arguments as well as he did, but that was the notion, I think."

The doctor nodded, gazing silently at the sand, and the squire resumed, with undiminished relish:

"We agreed that I should drop through the hole into the cave and make my way through the tunnels, where I often used to play as a boy, to the railway station a few miles from here, and there take a train for London. It was necessary for the joke, of course, that I should disappear without being traced; so I made my way to a port and put in a very pleasant month or two round my old haunts in Cyprus and the Mediterranean. There's no more to say of that part of the business, except that I arranged to be back by a particular time, and here I am. But I've heard enough of what's gone on round here to be satisfied that I've done the trick. Everybody in Cornwall and most people in South England have heard of the vanishing squire, and thousands of noodles have been nodding their heads over crystals and tarot cards at this marvelous proof of an unseen world. I reckon the reappearing squire will scatter their cards and smash their crystals, so that such rubbish won't appear again in the twentieth century. I'll make the peacock trees the laughingstock of all Europe and America." And he laughed heartily in anticipation.

But the doctor still gazed gravely at the sand, and did not look up or smile.

"Well," said the lawyer, who was the first to rearrange his wits, "I'm sure we're all only too delighted to see you again, squire. And I quite understand your explanation and your very natural motives in the matter. But I'm afraid I haven't got the hang of everything yet. Granted that you wanted to vanish, was it necessary to put bogus bones in the cave, so as nearly to put a halter round the neck of Doctor Brown? And

who put them there? The statement would appear perfectly maniacal, but, so far as I can make head or tail out of anything, Doctor Brown seems to have put them there himself."

The doctor lifted his head for the first time.

"Yes, I put the bones there," he said. "I believe I am the first son of Adam who ever manufactured all the evidence of a murder charge against himself."

It was the squire's turn to look astonished. The old gentleman looked rather wildly from one to the other.

"Bones! Murder charge!" he ejaculated. "What the devil is all this? Whose bones?"

"Your bones, in a manner of speaking," delicately conceded the doctor. "I had to make sure you had really died, and not disappeared by magic."

The squire in his turn seemed more hopelessly puzzled than the whole crowd of his friends had been over his own escapade.

"Why not?" he demanded. "I thought it was the whole point to make it look like magic. Why did you want me to die so much?"

Doctor Brown had lifted his head, and he now very slowly lifted his hand. He pointed with outstretched arm at the headland overhanging the foreshore, just above the entrance to the cave. It was the exact part of the beach where Paynter had first landed, on that spring morning when he had looked up in his first fresh wonder at the peacock trees. But the peacock trees were gone.

The fact itself was no surprise to them; the clearance had naturally been one of the first of the sweeping changes of the Treherne régime. But though they knew it well, they had wholly forgotten it, and its significance returned on them suddenly like a sign in heaven.

"That is the reason," said the doctor. "I have worked for that for fourteen years."

They no longer looked at the bare promontory on which the feathery trees had once been so familiar a sight, for they had something else to look at. Any one seeing the squire now would have shifted his opinion about where to find the lunatic in that crowd. It was plain in a flash that the change had fallen on him like a thunderbolt; that he, at least, had never had the wildest notion that the tale of the vanishing squire had been but a prelude to that of the vanishing trees. The next half hour was full of his ravings and expostulations, which gradually died away into demands for explanation and incoherent questions repeated again and again. He had practically to be overruled at last, in spite of the respect in which he was held, before anything like a space and silence were made in which the doctor could tell his own story. It was perhaps a singular story, of which he alone had ever had the knowledge, and though its narration was not uninterrupted, it may be set forth consecutively in his own words.

"First, I wish it clearly understood that I believe in nothing. I do not even give the nothing I believe a name, or I should be an atheist. I have never had inside my head so much as a hint of heaven and hell. I think it most likely we are worms in the mud, but I happen to be sorry for the other worms under the wheel. And I happen myself to be the sort of worm that turns when he can. If I care nothing for piety, I care less for poetry. I'm not like Ashe, here, who is crammed with criminology, but has all sorts of other culture as well. I know nothing about culture, except bacteriaculture. I sometimes fancy Mr. Ashe is as much an art critic as Mr. Paynter; only he looks for his heroes, or villains, in real life. But I am a very practical man, and my stepping stones have been solely scientific facts.

"In this village I found a fact—



fever. I could not classify it; it seemed peculiar to this corner of the coast; it had singular reactions of delirium and mental breakdown. I studied it exactly as I should a queer case in the hospital, and corresponded and compared notes with other men of science. But nobody had even a working hypothesis about it, except, of course, the ignorant peasantry, who said the peacock trees were in some wild way poisonous.

"Well, the peacock trees were poisonous. The peacock trees did produce the fever. I verified that fact in the plain, plodding way required, comparing all the degrees and details of a vast number of cases; and there were a shocking number to compare. At the end of it I had discovered the thing as Harvey discovered the circulation of the blood. Everybody was the worse for being near the things. Those who came off best were exactly the exceptions that proved the rule—abnormally healthy and energetic people like the squire and his daughter. In other words, the peasants were right.

"But if I put it that way, somebody will cry: 'But do you believe it was supernatural, then?' In fact, that's what you'll all say, and that's exactly what I complain of. I fancy hundreds of men have been left dead, and diseases left undiscovered, by this suspicion of superstition, this stupid fear of fear. Unless you can see daylight through the forest of facts from the first, you won't venture into the wood at all. Unless we can promise you beforehand that there shall be what you call a natural explanation, to save your precious dignity from miracles, you won't even hear the beginning of the plain tale. Suppose there isn't a natural explanation! Suppose there is and we never find it! Suppose I haven't a notion whether there is or not! What the devil has that to do with you, or with me in dealing with the facts I do know?

"My own instinct is to think there is—that if my researches could be followed far enough, it would be found that some horrible parody of hay fever, some effect analogous to that of pollen, would explain all the facts. I have never found the explanation. What I have found is the fact. And the fact is that those trees on the top there dealt death right and left, as certainly as if they had been giants, standing on a hill and knocking men down in crowds with a club.

"It will be said that now I had only to produce my proofs and have the nuisance removed. Perhaps I might have convinced the scientific world finally, when more and more processions of dead men had passed through the village to the cemetery. But I had not got to convince the scientific world, but the lord of the manor. The squire will pardon my saying that it was a very different thing. I tried it once; I lost my temper and said things I do not defend, and I left the squire's prejudices rooted anew like the trees. I was confronted with one colossal coincidence that was an obstacle to all my aims. One thing made all my science sound like nonsense. It was the popular legend.

"Squire, if there were a legend of hay fever, you would not believe in hay fever. If there were a popular story about pollen, you would say that pollen was only a popular story. I had something against me heavier and more hopeless than the hostility of the learned; I had the support of the ignorant. My truth was hopelessly tangled up with a tale that the educated were resolved to regard as entirely a lie. I never tried to explain again. On the contrary, I apologized, affected a conversion to the common-sense view, and watched events. And all the time the lines of a larger, if more crooked, plan began to grow clearer in my mind. I knew that Miss Vane, whether or no



she were married to Mr. Treherne, as I afterward found she was, was so much under his influence that the first day of her inheritance would be the last day of the poisonous trees. But she could not inherit, or even interfere, till the squire died. It became simply self-evident, to a rational mind, that the squire must die. But, wishing to be humane as well as rational, I desired his death to be temporary.

"Doubtless my scheme was completed by a chapter of accidents, but I was watching for such accidents. Thus I had a foreshadowing of how the ax would figure in the tale when it was first flung at the trees; it would have surprised the woodman to know how near our minds were, and how I was but laying a more elaborate siege to the towers of pestilence. But when the squire spontaneously rushed on what half the countryside would call certain death, I jumped at my chance. I followed him, and told him all that he has told you. I don't suppose he'll ever forgive me now, but that shan't prevent my saying that I admire him hugely for being what people would call a lunatic and what is really a sportsman. It takes rather a grand old man to make a joke in the grand style. He came down so quick from the tree he had climbed that he had no time to pull his hat off the bough it had caught in, and he went on his travels without one.

"At first I found I had made a miscalculation. I had thought his disappearance would be taken as his death, at least after a little time, but Ashe told me there could be no formalities without a corpse. I fear I was a little annoyed. But I soon set myself to the duty of manufacturing a corpse. It's not hard for a doctor to get a skeleton—indeed I had one—but Mr. Paynter's energy was a day too early for me, and I only got the bones into the well when he had already found it. His story gave me another chance, how-

ever. I noted where the hole was in the hat and made a precisely corresponding hole in the skull.

"The reason for creating the other clues may not be so obvious. It may not yet be altogether apparent to you that I am not a fiend in human form. I could not substantiate a murder without at least suggesting a murderer, and I was resolved that if the crime happened to be traced to anybody, it should be to me. So I'm not surprised you were puzzled about the purpose of the rag about the ax, because it had no purpose except to incriminate the man who put it there. The chase had to end with me, and when it was closing in at last, the joke of it was too much for me, and I fear I took liberties with the gentleman's easel and beard. I was the only person who could risk it, being the only person who could, at the last moment, produce the squire and prove there had been no crime at all.

"That, gentlemen, is the true story of the peacock trees; and that bare crag up there, where the wind is whistling, is a waste place I have labored to make as many men have labored to make a cathedral.

"I don't think there is anything more to say, and yet something moves in my blood and I will try to say it. Could you not have trusted a little the men whom you already trust so much? These men are men, and they meant something; even their fathers were not all fools. If your gardener told you of the trees, you called him a madman, but he did not plan and plant your garden like a madman. You would not trust your woodman about these trees, yet you trusted him with all the others. Have you ever thought what all the work of the world would be like if the poor were so senseless as you think them? But no, you stuck to your rational principle. And your rational principle was that a thing must be false because thousands of men had found

it true; that *because* many human eyes had seen something, it could not be there."

He looked across at Ashe with a sort of challenge, but though the sea wind ruffled the old lawyer's red mane, his Napoleonic mask was unruffled; it even had a sort of beauty from its new benignity.

"I am too happy just now in thinking how wrong I have been," he answered, "to quarrel with you, doctor, about your theories. And yet, in justice to the squire as well as myself, I should demur to your sweeping inference. I respect these peasants; I respect your regard for them; but their stories are a different matter. I think I would do anything for them but believe them. Truth and fancy, after all, are mixed in them, when in the more instructed

they are separate, and I doubt if you have considered what would be involved in taking their word for anything. Half the ghosts of those who died of the fever may be walking by now; and kind as these people are, I believe they might still burn a witch. No, doctor, I admit these people have been badly used, I admit they are in many ways our betters, but I still could not accept anything on their evidence."

The doctor bowed gravely, and respectfully enough; and then, for the last time that day, they saw his rather sinister smile.

"Quite so," he said. "But you would have hanged me on their evidence."

And, turning his back on them, as if automatically, he set his face toward the village, where for so many quiet years he had gone his round.



## DAPHNE

WHY do you follow me?  
Any moment I can be  
Nothing but a laurel tree!

Any moment of the chase  
I can leave you in my place  
A pink bough for your embrace!

Yet if over hill and hollow  
Still it is your wish to follow—  
I am off! To heel, Apollo!

EDNA ST. VINCENT MILLAY.



## Just an Actress

By Adele Luehrmann

Author of "The Saving Sense,"  
"A Question of Orchids," etc.

NAOMI, how are you and that nice boy of yours getting on?" "Do you mean Mr. Desbold?"

"Oh, is it still 'Mr. Desbold' and 'Miss Jackson' between you?" murmured Miss Hyland dryly. Her penciled brows rose as she watched the reflection of Naomi's face in the dressing-room mirror, before which they were standing one Saturday afternoon during a performance, while Naomi hooked the older actress' gown for her. Miss Hyland did not employ a maid, for reasons of economy which the girl understood and because of which she willingly performed such small services for her friend as the latter could not contrive to do for herself.

Her eyes being bent upon her task, Naomi had missed her companion's faintly mocking glance, and she now ignored the question that accompanied it.

"He's going away to-night," she said. Miss Hyland wheeled.

"My dear, don't tell me you've refused him!"

"Haven't had the chance," answered the girl, with an evasive laugh. "No, he's going on business. He'll only be away a month. Turn around."

Miss Hyland faced the mirror again.

"Only a month!" she echoed.

"He's going West to make a tour of the various mines his family are interested in. I have nothing whatever to do with it—unless"—Naomi broke off and looked up to smile amusedly into the mirror at her companion—"unless he's being sent to get him away from me," she went on. "I've half a notion that that's it. He hasn't said anything to make me think so—not a word—but I shouldn't wonder if his poor mother were worried to death about him, and has hit upon this trip as a clever scheme to rescue him from the clutches of a designing woman."

She laughed out gleefully, and, standing there confronting her radiant reflection, her eyes brimming with innocent mirth, she did indeed make the fancied view of herself seem a sheer grotesquerie.

Miss Hyland, however, did not smile.

"What does he say about his family?" she questioned

"He hasn't said anything about them lately," Naomi answered. "That's what makes me think they don't approve of me. Because at first he talked about them a lot—his mother and sister. I remember that the very first time he came to see me— It was the Sunday after the Actors' Bazaar. That was where we met, you know—"

"Yes, I remember. He was head over heels in love with you inside of five minutes."

Naomi let this comment pass.

"He told me about his sister that first afternoon. She must be rather an adorable kid—just fourteen—and evidently thinks him the grandest thing that ever happened. I thought it was awfully sweet, his being so interested in her. But then he's a dear anyhow. It's been really wonderful, the way he's treated me. I think he's been afraid that if he weren't terribly careful, I might think that he thought of me as only a little actress that men didn't have to mind their p's and q's with. He's never suggested my going to dinner or even to lunch alone with him—nothing that the most carefully chaperoned young girl of his own set wouldn't be allowed to do."

"Because he knows that if he were seen alone with you in a restaurant by any of his friends, they'd think you were not all you might be, and he doesn't want anybody to think that, because he wants to marry you," said Miss Hyland. She glanced up. "Doesn't he?" she asked.

"Marry! He's only a boy, much too young to think of marrying," parried Naomi.

"Rich young men nearly always marry early," said Miss Hyland. "Their families usually encourage it. They're only too glad to have them safely settled. I must say I don't blame his mother a bit for worrying. A handsome, attractive boy like that, rich in his own right, is a shining mark for every sort of undesirable woman. Mrs. Desbold doesn't know you, and no matter what he might say about you, it wouldn't convince her. Of course she's worried—if she knows how infatuated he is. But you'll win her over easily enough when she does know you, so you mustn't let that stop you from marrying him."

"Marrying him!" exclaimed Naomi. "Why, I'm years older than he is!"

"You don't look it. How old is he?"

"Only twenty-one!"

Miss Hyland smiled faintly.

"And you are twenty-three!"

"Oh, it isn't only the actual years that I mean," said the girl. "I'm so much older in experience. I've earned my own living since I was nineteen. He's never earned a penny in his life. That makes a great difference. He's always had everything he wanted without the slightest effort on his part—has been protected and indulged, a pampered pet since the day he was born."

"He doesn't give one that impression, my dear. He didn't strike me as being either spoiled or helpless. I thought him a very manly, capable sort of chap, very intelligent and very attractive."

"Oh, he is," Naomi assented quickly. "And I like him—I like him awfully. Only——"

"Only what?" asked Miss Hyland after a pause.

Naomi frowned down at the end of lace in her hand.

"This snapper is loose," she said. "I'll have to pin it."

Miss Hyland supplied the pin.

"Only what?" she repeated.

"Oh, I don't know. I guess he's just young," was the answer.

"He'll outgrow that."

"He's narrow, Miss Hyland—that's what I mean. He doesn't understand things. Take this matter of my dining alone with him. What possible harm would there be in it? I've been to dinner alone with lots of men."

"But it's his respect for you, my dear, that——"

"Yes, I know that. But the other men respected me, too. A girl doesn't have to be chaperoned every minute to qualify as respectable. What right have his friends to assume, if they see him in a restaurant alone with a girl, that she's not all she should be? What

right have they to measure everybody by their narrow, silly standards?"

"But you said a minute ago that you thought his being so careful about you was wonderful," protested Miss Hyland.

Naomi straightened herself with an impatient shrug, the fastening of the gown being now completed.

"I like his feeling that way about me, of course," she explained. "Knowing his point of view, I should resent his feeling otherwise. But I don't like his point of view. It does irritate me so, this antiquated idea that there are only two kinds of women, the right kind and the wrong kind. It's so silly!"

"But as long as you're the right kind and he realizes it, what difference does it make about his theories?" Miss Hyland argued, the wrinkles on her forehead merging into an anxious frown. "He's been brought up to believe that most women are good and to respect them for it. Why should you object to that, my dear?"

"I don't—of course. What irritates me is his judging their goodness solely by whether or not they obey certain silly little rules!"

The older woman sighed and applied her powder puff to her shrunken throat.

"He irritates you, my dear," she observed, reverting to her habitual dryness of tone, "simply because you are not in love with him."

"No—I'm not," returned Naomi with sudden bluntness, after a moment's pause. "And I'm going to tell him so frankly this afternoon when he comes to say good-by."

"Oh!" The busy powder puff halted abruptly. "Then you haven't told him that yet?"

"No—I——"

"Has he asked you?"

"No, but he's going to. I only wish he wouldn't," said Naomi, sighing. "Oh, Miss Hyland, I'm so ashamed of

myself!" she went on impulsively. "I've led Fred Desbold on, made him think he had a chance, and now I can't marry him—I simply can't! And he's going to be so unhappy about it! And he's been so decent to me, I feel like a beast. It was just for the money, too. That's what makes it so horrible. I knew all along that I should never care for him. But the feeling that I should never have to think of money again was so wonderful! You know, I've never known the time when I didn't have to think of money before I could think of anything else. In my home, down South, there never was any money for anything, and since I've been on the stage—well, you know what that's been—cheap hotels and boarding houses and saving every penny all winter for fear of going broke in the summer."

The world-weary, disillusioned eyes of the older woman looked up into the young, troubled face.

"Never to have to think of money!" she murmured. "That's worth a good deal, my dear." Then, as no answer came, "But perhaps you're in love with some one else?"

"Oh, no, but——"

"But you expect to be some day. Yes, of course you do."

Naomi stared down at her hands frowningly.

"You think I'm a fool to throw away such a chance, don't you?" she brought out at last.

"Oh, no, my dear, I understand perfectly how you feel." Miss Hyland reached for a hand mirror and pretended to inspect her coiffure with its aid. "I understand perfectly," she repeated in a matter-of-fact tone. "I did the same thing myself when I was about your age."

In the glass in her hand, she caught the startled lift of the girl's eyes, their stare of wonder, and she knew that her shot had gone home.

"And you think now that—you made

a mistake?" Naomi faltered after a silence.

The old actress looked round with her faintly ironical smile.

"What do you think about it yourself, my dear?"

The young eyes glanced away uneasily.

"I—I don't see how you could have married—without love," was the answer.

"That's exactly how I felt," assented Miss Hyland, with a light shrug. "But the woman who did marry the man later didn't care any more for him than I did. She was in love with another man, as I happened to know. I saw her not long ago driving in the park with her son. It was her son, I'm sure; he was so like his father. And she does love *him*, I suppose."

The shrug that should have emphasized the casualness of this afterthought died for some reason at birth. But if to exhibit herself as a warning was her purpose, this lapse in technique served the actress better than success could have done. For the sudden drooping of the thin shoulders lingered longer in Naomi's memory than any words that had been spoken. How terrible, she thought, to be old and alone!

"But surely there were plenty of other men that you could have had," she said. "I've often wondered why you never married, Miss Hyland. You were beautiful. There must have been dozens of men in love with you."

The thin shoulders rose wearily and fell again.

"Yes, there were others who cared for me—or thought they did. But I didn't happen to care for any of them, either."

"Were you never in love with *anybody*?" exclaimed Naomi.

"Oh, dear, yes," Miss Hyland answered lightly. "I was in love three

times—the lucky number, you'll notice. The first time—and the worst—was with a man that I thoroughly despised. He was a rotter and I knew it."

"Oh—Miss Hyland!"

"Think that can't happen, my dear? It can; take my word for it. The second time, the man was already married. And on the last occasion, I was forty or so and the man was twenty-five. That's my sentimental history."

Naomi walked back to her boarding place that afternoon. She had intended to take a car, for Fred Desbold was coming to see her and would probably be ahead of the hour, as usual; and she had felt that the kindest thing she could do would be to end his suspense—and his hopes—as quickly as possible. But now she approached the coming interview with reluctance and uncertainty, arguing with herself in a haphazard, panic-stricken fashion. Miss Hyland had awakened fears that she had never known before. How terrible, she said to herself over and over again, to be old and alone! Old and alone and poor!

Luckily for her good intentions, Desbold was himself late for their appointment. She turned her last corner just in time to see a taxi leave the curb as a slim figure bounded up the steps of her house. And he had only just seated himself in their favorite corner of the big boarding-house parlor, empty always at that hour, when she came in.

"I was afraid you'd get here before me," he said in his eager, boyish way. "I had to take Janet home, and"—he hesitated an instant—"and—there was a traffic block. I took Janet to see your *matinée*."

He made the final announcement with shining eyes. Janet was his kid sister, who, according to his report, had been tingling with eagerness to see Naomi on the stage. He and Janet were the most wonderful pals, it seemed, so



that Janet had naturally heard all about Naomi.

"Did she like the play?"

"Yes. And she loved you!"

Naomi looked down at the glove she was taking off.

"Why didn't you bring her back to see me afterward?" she asked.

There was a pause. His eyes fell also.

"Why—well, you see, she's never been behind the scenes, and I—I didn't know whether my mother would like it."

"Why didn't you bring her here, then?"

"Why—I wanted to see you alone. It's my last chance."

"Your mother wouldn't have liked that either, would she?"

She raised her eyes squarely to meet his with the question, and though his own did not waver, the boyish red in his face swept up to his hair.

"She wouldn't have liked my taking Janet anywhere without telling her first," he answered.

"Does she know how much you come here?"

"Yes," he said instantly, as if relieved to be able to reply without evasion. "And she knows I want to marry you. I've just told her I was going to ask you. That's"—he hesitated, then yielded to his impulse to be entirely frank—"that's why I was late," he finished. "There wasn't any block."

"What did she say?" Naomi asked.

His color mounted again,\* but he leaned forward and caught her hand in his.

"It's what you say that matters," he answered, "not what—*anybody* else says. And you will say yes, won't you? Won't you, Naomi?" he repeated pleadingly when she did not reply.

"I—I don't—know," Naomi brought out at last, speaking honestly from her unsettled mind.

"But you knew I was going to ask

you!" he protested at her uncertainty. "You must have guessed it! I've tried several times to do it, only you always changed the subject, so I thought I'd better wait and——"

The flash of an illuminating idea cut him short.

"Oh—is that why you wouldn't let me say anything—because of my mother?" he demanded eagerly. "Why, if I'd had any idea it was that, you couldn't have stopped me!" He gave a little broken laugh of relief. "I was afraid it was because you didn't—love me." His hand tightened on hers. "But you do, don't you? Tell me you do! Tell me so, Naomi!"

"What did your mother say?"

His eager young face clouded.

"She doesn't know you," he said. "If she did, she would feel just as I do. I'm sure she would. She couldn't help it. Why, Janet fell in love with you the minute she saw you. Just as I did. Do you remember that? I dreamed about you that night. I told you so the next day, didn't I, when I came to see you? Only I didn't tell you the whole dream—only a little of it. But I dreamed that I—kissed you. And—now I'm going to."

With the words, he was on his feet, bending over her. But she sprang up and aside.

"What did your mother say about me?"

He looked at her silently, baffled by her manner.

"What did she say?" Naomi repeated. "Sit down and tell me. I want to know."

"Oh, it's your being on the stage, of course," he replied reluctantly, resuming his seat when she had dropped back into her chair. "Of course, to her, you're just an actress and——"

He paused with an apologetic glance, and she waited for him to go on, though she knew that in that one phrase he had said everything. "Just an actress"

—could any three words be more expressive, more inclusive?

"She can't understand that you're different—she doesn't know you," he pleaded. "But when she knows you, everything will be all right. And—even if it isn't—well, I'm twenty-one, you know."

He added this last with evident hesitation, reluctant to seem to urge his material advantages in his behalf, yet wishing her to understand that he was in possession of his share of his father's estate and in no manner dependent upon his mother's consent to their marriage.

"You couldn't bear to marry against your mother's wishes," said Naomi. "You'd be fearfully unhappy. I know you would. And so would they. Your mother and sister are everything to you, and you are to them. If I should come between you and you were unhappy, I'd never forgive myself."

"But there won't be anything like that, dearest," protested the boy eagerly. "And—even if there should be——" He stopped an instant, and his throat worked with a dry swallow. "If I had to choose between you and them, I'd choose you—you know that. And I couldn't ever be unhappy about *anything* if I had you."

His whole heart spoke from his eyes, and the girl felt a sharp pang of regret. If only she could feel like that about him!

"But there won't be any trouble, I'm sure of it," he went on. "When my mother knows you, she'll feel different. You'll win her just as quickly as you did Janet and me. And there won't be any unhappiness for anybody. As soon as I tell my mother that we're engaged, she'll come to see you, and after that everything will be all right. But, of course, she—hasn't felt that—it was necessary for her to meet you—since we weren't engaged."

The faltering explanation made it

plain enough that there had been an effort on his part to bring about a meeting, and for the first time Naomi got a hint of the fight he must have been making for her. A wave of tenderness for him swept over her. What a dear, manly fellow he was! Why, oh, why couldn't she love him?

She looked at him in silence for a moment while he waited for her to speak. How clear his eyes were! How clean and straight he seemed all through! She did like him—anybody must.

"You must give me a little time to—think it over," she told him at last.

"But there isn't any time left!" he exclaimed. "I'm going away to-night, and I want your promise before I go."

"There are things to be considered," said Naomi, ignoring the protest. "I'm two years older than you, for one thing."

"What difference does that make?" he cried.

It made no difference, and she knew it. It was only an excuse. And all that she had said about coming between him and his people was an excuse also. She knew that she could take her place beside him as creditably as any girl his mother might select for him.

"My mother objects now because she doesn't know you," he urged, "and because she thinks there's still time to make me change my mind. She'd feel different if we were engaged. You'll see. She'll be lovely to you. So say you'll marry me, Naomi. I couldn't bear it if you didn't!"

"I—I'll tell you when you come back."

"Wait a whole month!"

Nevertheless, he finally assented, and even agreed to her condition that no letters should pass between them. They were to test themselves by time and separation, so that there should be no chance of their making a mistake, she said. And even as she spoke the

words and realized how different her test would be from his, she felt ashamed.

She awoke next morning with a dull weight upon her conscience. Why had she let herself be frightened by Miss Hyland? Putting Desbold off was unfairer than anything she had yet done in this whole wretched affair. It was dishonest, for she had known in her heart at the time that neither a month nor a year of thinking about it would alter her conviction that she could never marry him. She should have refused him absolutely, leaving him no hope whatever.

She thought of writing to him, but gave up the idea because she feared that he would not accept a written dismissal and that her letter might only lead to futile correspondence, or that he might interrupt his trip to come back. And as it was, perhaps, a genuine business trip, she must not interfere with it. She had done him injury enough without that.

It was about noon when she was called to the telephone to speak to Mrs. Oliver, and though she usually responded reluctantly to that lady's summons—always the preface to an invitation to tea—she was to-day so out of conceit with herself that she welcomed any distraction.

Just why she disliked Enid Oliver, Naomi would have found it hard to say. All she knew about her was that she had studied art abroad, married, and thereafter posed in New York for some years as a successful portrait painter—for as many years, that is, as Mr. Oliver had remained on earth to support the pose and her. On his death, she had renounced art for journalism, and had speedily become a conspicuous society reporter, which accounted for the fact that, as the phrase is, she knew everybody. Prosperous, also, she evidently was, for such a charming studio as hers came high,

higher, indeed, than the late Mr. Oliver had ever been able to go—and of course people wondered.

Still, that was not why Naomi did not like her. She knew that people always wonder about that sort of thing, that the world is chronically curious as to how an attractive, unattached woman pays her rent.

"There are several people coming that I want you to meet, that you *ought* to meet," Mrs. Oliver urged in her high, brisk voice, reinforcing her invitation even before her guest had had time to reply.

"Thank you, I'll come with pleasure," said Naomi, though she was not in the least impressed by the prospect of meeting people that Mrs. Oliver thought she ought to know.

If her hostess really had some distinct person in mind, which was doubtful, it was sure to turn out to be an incipient playwright who would confide to her that the reason why his plays had never been produced was that the New York managers were in league to prevent it.

As she lowered the receiver at Mrs. Oliver's good-by, the latter's voice suddenly recalled her.

"Oh, Miss Jackson, just a minute!"

"Yes?"

"My dear, do you know Gilbert Ferris?"

"Gilbert Ferris? No."

"Have you never heard of him?"

"No, I think not," said Naomi, searching her memory. "Who is he?"

Mrs. Oliver laughed.

"That's just what I want to know," she answered. "Somebody's written me that he's bringing Gilbert Ferris along this afternoon. That's all he says, as if I ought to know who Gilbert Ferris is. And I don't!"

"Sorry that I can't help you out," said Naomi, "but I don't think I've ever heard of him."

There was a pause, then:

"Are you sure?" pressed Mrs. Oliver. "Why—yes," replied Naomi, puzzled by the odd tone of the question. "I'd tell you if I had."

"Of course you would," Mrs. Oliver rejoined hastily. "I thought you seemed a little doubtful, that's all. And I'm so anxious to get some data about the man. You know how awkward it will be if he's really somebody one ought to know about. Well, come early, my dear."

Naomi hung up the receiver with a sigh. She had accepted the invitation because the long Sunday afternoon loomed cavernously before her, and anything was welcome that would fill it. Of course it was her own fault that it was empty; she should never have allowed Fred Desbold to monopolize her time as she had. But he had been such a relief from the other men that she knew, all older and more sophisticated than he, yet all so much less chivalrous, less scrupulous. He had been refreshing; that was his charm.

Her hostess' injunction to come early, she did not, however, observe. The chatter of the tea party was going full blast when she stepped off the elevator, and the first sentence that reached her clearly as she went down the hall told her that the studio's favorite theme was not being neglected:

"Woman's virtue is man's greatest invention."

"Here, old chap, give credit! That's a quote, isn't it—Balzac?"

"The only respectable women are those that don't lie."

"Oh—make a *few* exceptions!"

Then a feminine voice, piercingly: "What are you men always talking about woman's virtue for when the only thing that really interests any of you is her lack of it?"

This brought a general laugh of appreciation that had not yet subsided when Naomi greeted her hostess. The latter—short, plump, and blond, with

an effusive, but efficient manner—at once injected her into the nearest group with a blanket introduction.

"Miss Jackson belongs to the perfect profession, if I remember rightly," remarked a tall, dark man whom Naomi recalled having met there before.

"The perfect profession?" queried somebody standing near.

"The stage," said the dark man. "Am I right?"

"Yes, I'm on the stage," Naomi said. "But I didn't know that it was perfect."

"Because you don't avail yourself of its opportunities, perhaps." The dark eyes of the speaker narrowed quizzically upon her. "You people of the theater compose the one true democracy, the only one in which women are men's full equals. And why? Because the women of the stage are economically independent of the men, and exact and receive as a matter of course man's full liberty of conduct. Whoever questions an actress' moral—or immoral—right to do what she likes?"

"Don't mind him, my dear," said Mrs. Oliver, deftly extracting Naomi again and leading her on across the room. "I do wish, though, that they would sometimes talk about something else. But it seems that wherever two or three are gathered together——"

The lady broke off, her blond brows twitching in a startled way, as if her words had awakened an echo in her mind that for some reason arrested her. She seemed for a moment or two to be trying to find the connection in her memory.

"Well, I do wish they'd change the subject now and then," she said, beginning again. "But everybody knows that those that preach never practice."

This time their goal was a very young man with a pseudocynical glance and outstanding ears, whom Mrs. Oliver's beckoning finger detached without apology from his companions,

two youngish women in large transparent hats and costumes that expressed unflinchingly somebody's original ideas in color combinations.

"It's the Shurgin boy—didn't I tell you about him? The Providence Shurgins, you know—and, my dear, the *only* child!" Mrs. Oliver elucidated in an undertone for Naomi's sole benefit as they approached. "I've just been giving you away, Mr. Shurgin," she said a moment later, raising her voice. "I've been telling Miss Jackson how keen you were to meet her because you'd seen her on the stage."

The blankness of Mr. Shurgin's would-be-wise eyes instantly betrayed the fact that the hostess' remark was merely one of her favorite ruses for putting her guests *en rapport*, as she expressed it. But the young man rallied swiftly from his surprise, and it was plain by the eagerness of his hand-clasp that he was overjoyed to meet an actress, even if he had never seen or heard of her before.

"Great show!" he declared. "Top hole!"

Naomi returned a noncommittal answer. At any other time, it would have amused her to force the youth into a corner and make him admit that he hadn't a glimmering as to what "show" he was so heartily endorsing. But the thought of Fred Desbold suddenly robbed the situation of any enjoyment whatever. He had not been a footlight moth. He had liked her not because she was on the stage, but in spite of the fact. If she was "just an actress"—the phrase still rankled in her mind—to his mother, she was not that to him.

She glanced about the studio, and a feeling of disgust surged over her that she should be there, listening to this horrid boy who was trying so desperately to look even more horrid than he was. A familiar face across the room offering an excuse, she presently moved on, wasting scant ceremony on

the scion of the Shurgins. Ten minutes later, she sought her hostess to take leave of her on the plea of a sudden headache.

Rather to her surprise, Mrs. Oliver offered no protest.

"Yes, run along," she said. "Home's the best place for a headache."

What happened then struck Naomi as odd. Puzzling over it later, she decided that Mrs. Oliver must have seen Gilbert Ferris coming toward them even before she spoke, for before her few words were out, he was there. That she then tried to avoid introducing him, and that he tacitly forced her to, was obvious. And after murmuring the names, she turned brusquely and left them together. Indeed, so abrupt was her withdrawal that Naomi stared after her a moment in astonishment.

Ferris, however, appeared quite unmoved. He smiled with interest as he said:

"I think I heard somebody say that you are on the stage, Miss Jackson. Are you playing in the city at present?"

He was not a young man; at least to her youth he seemed quite middle-aged, surely past thirty, perhaps past thirty-five. There were gray hairs at his temples. For an instant he made her think of Fred Desbold, but that, she decided later, was only because of his perfect grooming and his air of physical fitness. She wondered who he was. He looked quite distinguished, she thought.

He had not seen the play that she was appearing in, he told her, having only just returned from the Orient and having as yet seen nothing of New York. But he would lose no time in giving himself that pleasure.

"Oh, please don't come on my account," she protested, answering his frankly admiring glance rather than his words. "My part is very small. You see, I'm hardly more than a beginner in my profession."



"That makes it all the more interesting," declared Ferris. "I like beginnings—and beginnings. They're so full of delightful promises."

His clear, keen eyes narrowed smilingly, expectantly, too, she thought, of what she would say in reply, and she felt awkward and school-girlish in returning only the simple hope that he would like their play if he came to see it.

She turned then to go, but he detained her with a comment on a Japanese print hanging on the wall behind her—the most available pretext. *Of course* she was interested in the art of the Orient. He had a few good examples that he had picked up, Chinese things. One of them had nearly cost him his life. He told her how, and told the mildly exciting yarn very well. And although she would have been glad now to stay on and talk to him, she felt that she could not decently do so.

But at her second move to go, he intervened again. There was to be an exhibition of Chinese prints at the Himmilisch Galleries, to begin with a private showing on Tuesday. If she would care to go on that day, he would be glad to have a card sent to her. He wrote her address down carefully when she accepted the offer, and wondered casually what time she thought she was likely to arrive. It would be such a pleasure to look the things over with her.

Naomi hesitated; she hardly knew why. Then she answered that she would probably arrive about four.

He was not at the galleries at four, however. The only familiar face that greeted Naomi was that of Mrs. Oliver, who came forward at once with her serenest smile. Whatever had prompted her strange behavior at their last meeting, it was not in evidence to-day.

"I suppose you're here as Gilbert Ferris' guest?" she said. "So am I. How do you like him?"

"He seems very nice," answered Naomi. "Who is he?"

Mrs. Oliver shrugged her plump shoulders.

"A rich man without responsibilities. Spends his time hunting the world over for interesting things—and people." She smiled. "You, by the way, my dear, are the only person that he took the slightest notice of Sunday. And—just a friendly tip—if you want to keep him, don't discuss him with people. He hates it—at least so I'm told."

When Ferris arrived, Naomi was alone, and he came straight to her. He had been most annoyingly delayed, but hoped that she had found other acquaintances.

"Mrs. Oliver was here," she answered. "But she has gone."

Ferris shrugged briefly.

"She doesn't care for Chinese art," he said. "She never did. I tried to interest her in it years ago in Paris." He turned his head as he spoke and thus missed his companion's quick stare of surprise. "This is the prize of the collection," he went on of the print nearest them. "Let's start somewhere else and end here."

She murmured an assent and moved along at his side, but for a minute or two heard little that he said. She was thinking; she was wondering why Mrs. Oliver had pretended not to know Ferris, not even to have heard of him. Could she have merely been trying to find out if Naomi knew him? But if so, why?

"Here's a wonderful thing," said Ferris. "Do you notice—" and she mustered her wits to listen.

He liked beginnings, Ferris had said, but many times, during the following weeks, Naomi wondered how their acquaintance—friendship she was calling it then—which had begun so curiously would end.

Was he in love with her? She did not know. Once or twice the thought



had come to her that he was only studying her, dissecting her mind under the microscopic lenses of those clear, cool eyes of his, but when she trailed the notion to its source, she found only a few vague impressions. That he found her interesting she could not doubt, however. No man had ever been more attentive to her, though his attentions were so oddly impersonal.

At first, to be sure, he had been different—that is, more personal, quite like other men who had besieged her; but she had shrunk from the idea of a flirtation with him—or with any one—just at that time. It would not be fair to Fred Desbold, she felt. Even though she was sure—surer now than ever—that she would never marry him, still, in a way, that month belonged to him. That was why she refused to lunch or dine with Ferris, despite the consciousness that he must think her attitude absurdly prudish.

If such was his view, however, he did not betray the fact. He accepted her dictum without protest—almost, she thought, as if he understood the feeling that underlay it. Of course he did not, he could not; but that was the wonderful thing about him—he seemed to understand everything. His outlook was so broad, so unclouded by prejudices and traditions.

Was she in love with Gilbert Ferris? No, no more than with Desbold; she was sure of that. Not as much, perhaps, for she never felt for him the quick surge of protective tenderness that the boy's youth and frank ardor aroused in her at times. Still, if neither filled her heart, Ferris at least filled her mind, and that was something no man had ever done for her before.

How knowing him had already multiplied her contacts with life! To be rich with Fred Desbold had seemed to her, in the last analysis, to promise nothing more than freedom from worry about mere existence—food and shelter. In

Ferris' hands money became a magic instrument that could open the way to all the wonderful places and wonderful people in the world. Even in these few weeks, how he had pushed back her horizon! But—how would it end?

Her answer came suddenly, unexpectedly, and in this wise.

He had referred a number of times to a collection he had made of Chinese art objects, which he meant to show to his friends as soon as they should be unpacked and suitably arranged, and in the third week of their acquaintance, he one day announced the following Sunday afternoon as the time he had decided upon for the exhibition. However, he was not quite satisfied, he said, with the placing of one or two of the best pieces, and he was anxious to have the benefit of a fresh eye, especially one like hers, unspoiled by a too great familiarity with such things. Would she mind running in for a minute—with Mrs. Oliver, of course—after her *matinée* on Saturday to look things over?

Of course she would not mind! She would be delighted to help, if he really thought she could, she told him. She might have added that she was eagerly anticipating seeing his apartment, rather more than his collection indeed, and his friends more than either. For he had never mentioned any of his friends to her—none in New York, at least, though he spoke often of people he had met abroad. That was rather odd, she had thought.

Saturday morning, Mrs. Oliver called up to say that the time set had become impossible for her, owing to a business appointment, but she had promised Mr. Ferris that they would come without fail after Naomi's evening performance.

"Late! Nonsense!" she replied to Naomi's objections. "We're not going to stay long. Besides, there's no other time. I never get up till noon on Sun-

day. Don't be silly. I'll call for you. What time? Eleven-fifteen? All right. And, my dear, do wear an evening gown. I must—going somewhere else first—and I'll feel such a fool rigged up if you're not."

Regarding herself in the mirror Saturday night, Naomi felt a pleasant little thrill. Ferris had never seen her in evening dress, and she could not help being glad of the chance to show herself to him at her best, for she knew that she was at her best with her round white arms and throat bared.

She was ready, waiting, at the appointed hour, but when a knock finally sounded on her dressing-room door, it was the act, not of Mrs. Oliver, but of a taxicab chauffeur.

"Mrs. Oliver sent me," he explained. "She said she didn't have time to come down here and then go back uptown. She said for me to take you up."

Directing the man to wait, Naomi deliberately delayed starting for a quarter of an hour, to avoid arriving ahead of her chaperon. Despite the precaution, however, when she reached Ferris' rooms, Mrs. Oliver was not there.

"She must be on her way," he said. "But I'll call up her apartment to make sure."

"Yes, do," said Naomi, grateful for his instant comprehension of her unspoken wish. How he always understood!

She remained standing, when he had gone, looking about her curiously. The room was smaller than she had expected and seemed to her crowded, with so many lovely, foreign-looking things claiming the eye at once. She wondered which were the ones he was uncertain as to the placing of, and hoped anxiously that she would not appear too stupid when her opinion was asked.

"Mrs. Oliver's telephone doesn't answer," Ferris reported on his return,

"which means, of course, that she has left. Let me take your coat."

He came over to her as he spoke, and she unfastened the coat and let it slip into his hands. She could feel his gaze upon her as she stood revealed; then his warm breath on her shoulder made her move sharply away, an action that she tried immediately to cover by a comment on a Chinese vase standing near by.

He answered in an odd, absent tone. Then, "You must be hungry after your strenuous labors of the evening," he said more interestedly, and crossed to a table on which were several napkin-covered plates. "There are some sandwiches and things here, I believe."

"Let's wait for Mrs. Oliver. I'm not hungry," replied Naomi.

"Oh, she'll be here in a minute," he said easily, as he bent to take a bottle of champagne from a wine cooler on the floor beside the table.

A protest sprang to the girl's lips at sight of the wine, but remembering that she was not the only guest for whom the refreshments had been prepared, she kept still until he held out a glass to her.

"No, thank you," she said; adding at once, because she felt that her refusal must seem to him school-girlish, "But I should like a sandwich."

With his empty hand, he removed the napkins from the plates, and she took a sandwich from one of them.

"If I must drink alone, I suppose I must," he said with a smile, and raised the glass.

For a moment he held it up as if he were going to toast her, but apparently changed his mind and drank without further ado. After a full swallow, he lowered the glass again with a frown.

"Tastes queer, somehow. Wonder if it can be the glass," he murmured and, setting the glass down on the table, he took up the other that he had filled. He sipped at it critically several

times. "Just my imagination, I fancy," he said, but he drank no more. "I'll wait for Mrs. Oliver's verdict," he remarked as he placed the half-empty glass beside its mate, and helped himself to a sandwich.

"Which are the things that you don't like the arrangement of?" Naomi asked, rather relieved that he was not going to drink any more. She was sorry that he had the wine there at all.

He turned at the question and began explaining to her his scheme of arranging his treasures, pausing to consult her, to shift things, to consult again, to shift again. In her anxiety not to seem a dunce, she gave her whole mind to his questions and forgot the passage of time and Mrs. Oliver. It was he who at last brought them to her attention by taking out his watch.

"By Jove, it's after twelve!" he exclaimed, as if startled by the lateness of the hour. "Something must have happened to Mrs. Oliver. I'll try her phone again."

He went out, but returned again almost immediately.

"The operator downstairs says there's a boy on his way up with a note. I'll just see what it is before I phone," and he went on to the hall and the outer door. In a moment Naomi heard the door open, then close again.

"It's from Mrs. Oliver," he announced with an annoyed frown, breaking the envelope roughly with his finger. "I wonder what has happened." At that moment, a telephone bell sounded from a room beyond. "Just see what she says, will you, while I answer that bell?" and, handing the note to Naomi, he left her.

Troubled and ill at ease, she pulled out the note and opened it, and as she did so, a slip of paper that was inclosed fell out. She stooped and picked it up. On it she read:

DEAR GIL: I almost renege and came myself. This is the rottenest thing I ever

did in my life, and I wouldn't do it for another soul but you. But I know you'll make it up to the girl somehow. Thanks for the check. You are generous. E.

Naomi stared at the meaningless words. The girl? Did that mean her? Make it up to her? For what? A vague feeling of fear seized her as she turned to the note itself.

MY DEAR MR. FERRIS: Too sorry for words, but I turned my ankle as I was getting into the cab—my fool heels, of course! As luck would have it, my phone is out of commission, so I have to write. Do get word to Miss Jackson. She may have waited at the theater for me, though I asked her not to. What a mess I've made for you! You'll never forgive me, I know. Yours regretfully,  
ENID OLIVER. o

Naomi's eyes darted back to the inclosure. That was a private word to Ferris, not meant for her eyes; so much was clear. The other had been sent to show. "I almost renege and came." Then the story of the ankle was a lie! It was all a lie, a scheme to get her there alone!

Instinctively she turned to the hall door. She must get away at once while there was time. She looked about for her coat where she had last seen it thrown across a chair. It was gone; he had taken it away. She'd go without it, then. Wheeling, she started forward; then recoiled as the knob of the other door was turned. It was too late. In an instant he would be there, standing between her and the hall.

Crushing the slip of paper in her hand to hide it, she bent her head a little over the note and tried to compose her features. He must not suspect that she knew her danger, that she was afraid. She must think of some way to get him to leave her alone again. Then, the instant he was gone, she would steal away. That was her only chance.

She looked up at his entrance, holding out the note.

"Poor Mrs. Oliver!" she exclaimed.

"She's turned her ankle and isn't coming. Isn't it a shame? And all those lovely sandwiches!" She forced a faint laugh, though her heart was in her throat as she added: "I'm going to have just one more, while you get my coat."

"You'll have time for several," he answered, glancing up from the note. "I'll have to phone for a taxi to take you home." Then he twisted the note and threw it on the burning gas logs in the fireplace. "Can't tell you how sorry I am that this has happened, Miss Jackson," he said, coming over to her, his tone very earnest, his face contrite. "But I'll get you home just as quickly as possible. And I do hope you'll forgive me."

"Why—of course. It wasn't your fault. It just happened."

She gave a little shrug, and moved away toward the table on which the sandwiches stood, careful to keep her left hand hidden in the folds of her dress.

"It's a shame," he declared regretfully. "And I'm letting you go home hungry, too. I'll tell you what. I'll put up some of those things, and you can take them along."

Naomi looked at him sharply, involuntarily. Could she have misjudged him? Could it be that those ominous words that she was crushing between her fingers did not refer to her at all? He had wheeled as he made his suggestion and pulled out the drawer of a cabinet in which there were boxes of various sizes.

"Don't bother, please," she begged. "I'd rather you'd phone for the cab. I really must go, you know. Besides, I shall have time to eat all I want before I go."

"I'll just get a box, and you can put in whatever you want while I'm phoning," he answered, and so reasonable was the plan that she felt a rush of shame and contrition. She had mis-

judged him, of course. But, thank Heaven, he would never need to know how silly she had been!

The next moment her nerves, which had relaxed with the return of her confidence, tensed again as an electric bell rang sharply in the hall without. And at the sound, her host's head lifted, and his back stiffened visibly. For a moment neither spoke. Then he dropped a box that he had in his hand back into the drawer and closed it.

The bell rang again. Ferris turned and looked at Naomi.

"Who is it?" she asked nervously.

"I—don't know," he said. His face was pale. He went to the door that led to the other rooms of the apartment and opened it. "Will you just wait in there, please? It will be—safer," he said.

Mechanically Naomi started to obey, but when she reached the door and saw that the room beyond was a bed chamber, she stopped, turned sharply, and stepped back to the table.

"No. I'll stay here," she said.

"As you like," he assented with a deprecatory shrug. "I'm terribly sorry," he added then and turned toward the hall. "If you'll excuse me, I'll see who it is."

For a moment or two, wild, terrified thoughts assailed Naomi, memories of stories she had heard and read of girls entrapped like that, found then by detectives engaged for the purpose, and forced to figure afterward in hideous divorce suits, their good names blasted forever. "You'll make it up to the girl somehow." Was that what those words meant? Was that the sort of thing Ferris was going to do to her? Why not? She knew nothing about him—nothing. She had never even tried to find out anything. Not because of Mrs. Oliver's warning, but because she knew hardly anybody in New York except people of the stage, and she had felt sure that none of them would

know him. He was so obviously not of their world.

What should she do? What could she do? She started frantically for a window, to call for help, but as her hands went out to raise the sash, she remembered the paper she held.

She paused. The outer door was opening; then a voice came, and at the sound a low sob of relief broke from her. For the voice was Fred Desbold's, and at the moment that fact—the certainty it brought that no matter what came, she was safe—was so overwhelming that she did not even wonder at his being there.

"I don't believe you!" The boyish tones came loudly, indignantly.

Ferris' reply was lower. She could not make out his words.

"That's a lie, Uncle Gil!"

At the title, Naomi's frightened thoughts cleared suddenly. Uncle! Oh, now she knew, now she understood—those words of Mrs. Oliver's—everything! She was not to be blackened before the world, but in Fred Desbold's eyes. That was Ferris' scheme, and Mrs. Oliver had known it all along! How that explained things! They had started the instant Fred was out of the way. They had not lost a single day. And they had been clever—she had to admit that. But not clever enough—not quite. Her fingers that clutched the precious paper tingled at its contact.

She heard Ferris' subdued tones again, then quick steps, and Desbold came in. She saw his eyes fly wildly about the room before they found her, half hidden by the window curtain. As their eyes met, his face turned scarlet, then whitened, and he fell back a step, as if in recoil from a violent shock.

"It's true—it's true!" He gulped the words painfully.

"My dear chap, don't be absurd!" protested Ferris from the doorway. "I told you that Miss Jackson was here

and why. She happens to be alone merely because the lady who was to have come also met with an accident. We've just received word of it, and I was on the point of calling a taxi for Miss Jackson when you rang the bell. This is the truth, Fred—on my honor."

Naomi stared at Ferris, fascinated. She had seen much good acting on the stage, but never better than this. Every word that he had spoken was true, but his utterance, his aspect, was that of a man who was lying, lying nobly to save a woman.

"Who was the lady?"

"Mrs.—er—Oliver. She turned her ankle as she was getting into a cab to come. She sent a note to explain. Her telephone happened to be out of order."

"Where is the note?"

"The note?" Ferris looked vaguely about. "Why—what did I do with it?" He gave Naomi an appealing glance, as if his own powers of invention were nearing exhaustion. "I—I believe I threw it in the fire—didn't I?"

She did not answer him. Indignant blood throbbed at her temples, but she pressed her lips tightly together. Ferris crossed to the fireplace as he spoke, and her glance, following, fell on the pair of champagne glasses standing on the table. Behind the table, the door to the bedroom stood open. How cleverly he had staged his little scene! But let him finish his part; then *one* of his puppets would speak a few lines not set down for it. She raised her clenched left hand, which held the crumpled slip of paper, and pressed it against her breast, the other hand covering it like a shield.

"Yes, by Jove, burned to a crisp!" exclaimed Ferris. "But Miss Jackson read the note herself. You needn't take my word for it. Or you can go to Mrs. Oliver."

Oh, yes, he could go to Mrs. Oliver! That was safe enough, thought Naomi. She had Ferris' generous check; she



would not fail him. They had planned the whole thing together, the two of them, and—

The two? Two only? An ugly suspicion flashed into her mind. She turned to Desbold. His eyes were on her, waiting for her answer.

"How did you happen to come here to-night?" she questioned. "Why did you come back to New York so soon?"

He hesitated, but for a moment only.

"My mother wrote to me—about you," he answered, in a strained voice.

"What did she write to you about me?" Naomi asked. So her suspicion was valid, she thought. His mother had been in the thing, too. His mother!

The boy swallowed hard before words came, but he gripped himself and poured out the story, his head bent.

"She—she'd heard things about you—before I went away, but she wasn't sure, and so she didn't tell me. And when I was gone, she got my uncle to—find out. Then she wrote to me about his seeing you every day, almost, and that you'd said you'd come—here—some time—probably Saturday—to-night. And she said, if I wanted to see for myself, I only had to come back. And—I came."

He raised his head and looked at her, his eyes hot and miserable.

"I didn't believe it—I couldn't—until I saw you. Oh, Naomi, tell me that it's true, what he says, that you did expect somebody else to be here! I'll believe it, if you tell me. Oh, Naomi, *make me believe it!*"

To have his faith in her restored to him—that was what his eyes and voice were pleading for. And how easily she could do it! She had only to open her hand and let him read the words hidden there.

Yes, she could give him back his faith in her. She could confound her enemies—and how at that moment she

longed to confound them! She had only to tell the truth and show that paper; then take her triumphant departure, scorning to marry into so despicable a family. That would let her out perfectly all round.

But how about the price of her triumph? Who would pay that? Not only her enemies, but Fred Desbold, also. That could not be avoided. To vindicate herself fully in his eyes, she must destroy his faith in his mother, embitter his love for her and for his home.

Had she the right to justify herself at such a cost to him? Not unless she married him and with her own love and devotion made up to him for what he had lost through her.

But she could not marry him, and she had always known that she could not. That was the thought that pricked her, the realization that it was her own act that had brought this dilemma upon her. Had she given the boy his answer honestly when he had asked for it, she would never have seen Ferris. For Fred had obviously told his mother of the month that he must wait to know his fate, and she had seized the chance that month had given her. No doubt she had already had Naomi's life investigated and found no blame in it, and, knowing that she could not discredit her by fair means, she had used foul.

She had brought the thing on herself—that was what it boiled down to—and she must pay her own way out, either by marrying Desbold or—

"Naomi—why don't you—answer?" Fred Desbold stammered in anguished tones when her silence lengthened unbearably.

Naomi looked over at Ferris for a moment, tightening her fingers upon the paper in her hand, for the impulse to open them and show what they held almost overcame her resolution, as she met his eyes. But she mastered the



feeling quickly and turned back to Desbold. She must get the thing over.

"There was no one else expected here to-night. No one else was invited," she answered, by a supreme effort keeping her voice firm. "Mr. Ferris has merely been trying to shield me."

She was aware that Ferris moved, but she kept her eyes on Desbold, though the strain of the effort made her dizzy and she could not see his face clearly. He recoiled from her—that she felt, rather than saw—and then, fearing that he was going to speak again and with the thought only of preventing that, she added hastily:

"Your mother was right, you see. I'm just an actress, after all."

She had turned away on the words, unable any longer to bear the sight of his stricken face, and now, impelled by the one desire to end her ordeal, she crossed to the table and picked up one of the half-empty wine glasses.

"Mr. Ferris, may I have just another drop before I go? I'm so thirsty."

From behind her came a choking sound, then a rush of steps, and in another moment the loud closing of the outer door. Desbold was gone.

She set down the champagne glass. Ferris had started forward at her request, but had halted at his nephew's exit, and when she turned, she found him staring at her questioningly, suspiciously. What was her game, he seemed to wonder.

She caught the look and read it, and a shiver of revulsion swept over her. Back in her head there were things she

had meant to say to him when they were alone, things that would be burned forever on his memory, but now she only gazed back at him in silence, curiously. It was as if she suddenly beheld before her a stranger to whom none of those things in the back of her head would be intelligible.

"Would you be so good as to get my coat?" she heard her voice say presently, in cold, quiet tones. "I shall not trouble you to order a taxi. The boy downstairs will call one for me."

He hesitated, peering at her from between his narrowed lids, still puzzled, suspicious. Then he wheeled and brought her coat from the adjoining room. She let him help her into it, and not until that was done did she open her left hand. She smoothed out the crushed paper slowly and deliberately before she held it out.

"That came in the note from Mrs. Oliver," she said with cold distinctness. "I did not realize until I had read it that you would not wish me to see it."

He took the thing from her, his eyes widening in surprise for an instant. Then he read, and his thin face flushed to a murky red. But his confusion was only momentary. It gave way quickly to an overpowering wonder.

"Why didn't you—use this?"

She had already started for the door, but now she stopped, turned her head slightly, and looked at him. And in that look the contempt that she felt and that a thousand words could not have held was concentrated.

"That," she answered, "is something that *you* could never understand."



## IN LATE AUTUMN

THEY must have died, the woods, for late this noon,

On visiting the place, I saw their ghost.

I looked straight through it, at a frightened moon

And unsuspected stretch of sea and coast!

ANTOINETTE DE COURSEY PATTERSON.



# The Archradicals

By Maude Radford Warren

Author of "Peter Peter," "Barbara's Marriages," etc.



**A**DRIENNE BLAKE was not an archradical from temperamental inclination; she became one for the sake of expediency, in order to aid herself in her game, which was that of all girls—the achievement of getting married. Just bad luck had kept Adrienne single at twenty-eight, for she was rich, high placed, and good looking. Also, she knew her way about, having been brought up by a worldly aunt.

"If you rear a girl as we are told that a young gentlewoman should be reared," ran this good lady's theory, "let her hear nothing she should not hear, and keep her in a middy blouse till she's eighteen, you have a wall-flower on your hands. But if, just when she ought to be sweet and dewy, you let her go to entertainments where there are boys, wear jewelry, give dinners and theater parties, and hear all the worldly talk that's going, then you'll evolve a keen young person who will walk off with the best match of her first season."

Adrienne had justified her training. At nineteen she had wanted to marry Sears Oldham, very eligible indeed, who was nibbling at the bait. But her aunt had decided in favor of one still more eligible. He had lost his life in romantically saving Adrienne's. That had given Adrienne a sentimental handicap which wise rivals and other lady pirates had played up heavily.

Looking back, after her market was safely made, Adrienne perceived that it was Sears Oldham who had laid the train which led to her becoming, temporarily, an archradical. They were sitting out a dance one evening, watching younger people on the floor. Adrienne would rather have danced, but Oldham did not want to, and so they were sitting it out. He would, of course, have danced with her if she had been a *débutante*. Oldham thought Adrienne was so safe that he did not care how easily she saw through him.

"Nice, pretty crop of *débutantes* we have this year," Adrienne said, representing a sigh.

She knew that, to a *débutante*, she was what a potted plant is to a sheaf of roses—charming, of course, but a background piece. She sighed, too, as she thought how much more difficult men are each year. The *débutante* of the vintage of 1918 has ten times the chance with a man of her own decade that a girl of the vintage of 1912 has with the men of any decade. The men know the moves of their game too well to yield easily to the spell of love.

"Nice lot, yes," said Oldham in his lazy voice. "And, by Jove, Adrienne, more clever than ever!"

"Bothering you?" she queried.

"Time was, Adrienne," he said, "that I could see a thought forming in the brain of an innocent-eyed *débutante* be-

fore she knew of it herself and—and——"

"And could tell her something that would explain how utterly desirable and how utterly unattainable you are," she furnished.

"So sweet of you," he agreed.

"You think you're so iron-clad and impregnable, Sears!" she attacked. "I wish with all my heart that some *débutante* would come along and carry you utterly off your feet and sail away with you. I'd love to listen to your yells."

Oldham complacently accepted the assumption that the buccaneer would have to be a *débutante*.

"It takes all my gray matter to keep ahead of them. The first slip I make, I'll know I'm getting old, and I'll stay in the club."

"You'll go yet," she warned him.

"No girl could get me," Oldham said, feeling that he could afford to be fatuous with an old friend, "unless she chloroformed me—and I know the look of the sponge."

"Oh, I hope, I hope!" she raged.

"You needn't," he replied. "I've got a device to keep off the prehensile innocents of this season."

She went away with another partner. By chance, later in the evening, she was left sitting near him and a *débutante*. Then she learned what his device was. The *débutante* was looking at him with wide, innocent eyes. She was employing consciously and unconsciously every lure that was hers. Adrienne, watching them, knew that if Oldham had been twenty-two instead of thirty-two, he'd have been gone. She wondered he was not gone as it was. Then she heard his reply to the *débutante*, who had evidently been talking to him about love.

"Perhaps I ought not to say so," Oldham murmured, "to one so young as you, but with all my soul I believe in free love. It is the deepest conviction of my life."

The girl changed the conversation and asked to be taken to her chaperon. She had to, because she was so young that it was necessary for her to be innocent and shocked.

"Oh, the clever wretch!" thought Adrienne. "The clever, lazy wretch! Oh, how he knows the game!"

The next day Adrienne took her second step toward becoming an archradical. She was talking to her aunt's secretary, Sarah Walters, about some uplift work in which they were engaged. For Adrienne had taken her lot by proper graduations. There had been the stage where she had still had the airs of a *débutante*; the first freshness was going, but she had to be the last person to know it. There had been the stage where she had had to let the *débutantes* confide in her, assuming a "when-I-came-out" retrospection. There had been the stage where she was supposed to care more for luncheons and box parties than for dinner dances. Finally, there was the present stage, where she could begin to take a serious interest in the fine arts or else in social-welfare work. This was the beginning of the end, and the end was really more desirable than the beginning. For in the beginning, she could not hope for any real distinction in her specialty; she could only expect a polite welcome from the leaders. But at the end, say when she was forty, she would be settled, definitely out of the running, safe in an unpitied spinsterhood, and she could really make herself count in the things wherein men did not matter, and women, and artistic and civic progress, did.

Sarah Walters was over thirty, and poor and plain. Adrienne's aunt regarded her as a useful instrument to whom she must be vaguely and casually polite. Adrienne, however, knew that she was not negligible.

"Sarah," she said, yawning, "I wonder if you'd have liked the party last

night. It bored me. Now, you don't look happy, but you do look interested."

"You could be, too," Sarah said, "if you ever did any work."

Adrienne reflected with a rueful smile that she had worked pretty hard to get married. But work of that kind is not supposed to show even when it is successful.

"Also," continued Sarah, "you never did know how to think, and you are fast forgetting how to feel. What would brace you, perhaps, would be to hear a little real talk."

"Where could I hear it?" asked Adrienne.

"In what my friends are so good as to call my salon," said Sarah modestly.

Adrienne repressed a smile. The idea of a woman who worked for a hundred dollars a month having a salon! She agreed, however, to go next evening to the house Sarah shared with another social secretary in a crowded ward where people of forty different nations pushed each other for room, and where, Adrienne reflected, almost anything could rise, even a salon.

Adrienne had entered many rooms in the course of her life, but none had ever proven so alien to her experience as Sarah's salon. Sarah sat in the center of a shabby, but artistic room, clad in a deep crimson gown that seemed to be all low neck and bare arms and floating draperies. About her was a company that Mrs. Belden would have called "undeniably mixed," and by that she would have meant that no one was present who in any degree mattered. At first Adrienne had the impression that more women were present than men. Then she saw that numerically they were fewer than the men, but in all that counts they were more worth while. They were, as a rule, over thirty, chiefly workers in the fine arts, with perhaps a few settlement residents and a teacher or two. Some young girls were present who obviously worked in

shops or offices—fine, forceful types these, sharpened and matured through hard blows from the business world, bound to get on in life.

As to the men, the older ones looked unsuccessful or anæmic or physically unattractive. They gave Adrienne the impression that they considered that if they had failed in life, that was life's fault on account of the way the world is run. They were ready to improve the running, and they considered that their opinions and personalities ought to count. The young men, she thought, were either untutored egoists, tremendously eager to score and without much reason for expecting it, or else they seemed young people of real promise, interested, like herself, in a new experience. The only one that seemed to her at all interesting to look at was one Richard Grayle, who, she learned afterwards, was hoping to paint portraits.

Sarah's guests sat about her with appreciative eyes. This was a surprise to Adrienne, who simply could not see Sarah as the center of anything.

"Speaking of sex——" began Sarah, and a little interested rustle rose among the guests, the men drawing nearer.

Adrienne's eyes widened as she looked at Sarah's plain face, fairly galloping toward middle age.

"Good heavens," thought Adrienne disrespectfully, "what has the woman to do with sex?"

"Speaking of sex——" began Sarah, and proceeded to speak of it.

Adrienne's face was presently as crimson as Sarah's robe. The poor girl had never heard a spade called a spade with capital letters, with italics, with loud, brazen emphasis, with the ringing of bells and the clashing of cymbals. Adrienne had been taught to take sex for granted, and to speak of it, if at all, with indirection. But Sarah told why it was granted, and how and when and where. Adrienne felt a good deal the same horror she had felt as a

child when she had first stumbled upon passages in the Bible and Shakespeare which were, to put it gently, unladylike. Only, the Bible and Shakespeare did not have any italics, nor did they interpret. Sarah interpreted in a way that would have profoundly interested Shakespeare and the ancient Hebrews.

Cooking and dessicating in her own blushes, Adrienne listened. All this discussion, she perceived, was done in the name of science, and yet she guessed, from watching them, that sensation was not missing in the listeners. Adrienne presently perceived that, in Sarah's parleyings, sex and soul were indissolubly linked. Adrienne didn't just see how—especially when one talked about it. Then it dawned on her that unless there was the assumption of soul, it would not be possible to discuss sex. Sarah waved her beautiful bare arms and looked straight ahead of her with wide intellectual eyes, and let her agreeable voice ripple along upon what had always been to Adrienne not only unspeakable, but also unthinkable.

"The mother," cooed Sarah, "has a right to her own child. The law should be such that after any spinster is thirty, she has a right to have a child if she can afford to bear and rear it. No man should have the authority to say how it should be educated; no question should be asked as to its parentage; a circle of fine radical people should give it all necessary background—"

"But what," thought Adrienne, "what if the child showed a certain normal curiosity about its father? And what if it inherited conservative tendencies, and wished to leave its fine radical background and seek the society of pin-headed people with a prejudice in favor of legitimate ties?"

And following these thoughts, Adrienne, forgetful of her blushes, spoke aloud.

"You keep talking of the freedom of the mother," she said, "and I suppose

that means the freedom of the father, too—that is, of the man who would be the father if fathers were recognized. But doesn't their following of freedom sometimes result in the negation of freedom to the child?"

This remark met with a little superior surprise. Adrienne perceived that any interruptions of Sarah's flow of speech should not be in the nature of objections, but merely amplifications of her points, or concrete examples illustrating them. Sarah explained to Adrienne at length that if the parents were free, it would follow as the night the day that the child would be free. And if puzzling human exceptions occurred, then those would not be the fault of Sarah's theory. The logic was faultless, even though sporadic children might pay illogical penalties. To Adrienne's remark that a child needed a man's influence, the reply was that the mother's men friends would be ready to help bring it up, and that they would count in its life as teachers count in the lives of ordinary children. Evidently no emasculation of the child's culture was going to be permitted.

As the evening passed, Adrienne realized that some people were present in the assemblage not ordinarily to be met with by a sheltered girl. A little red-eyed, satyr-faced person, smoking a fat cigar and obviously estimating the beauty of Sarah's arms, was, she realized, a trafficker in wares not to be spoken of in polite society. He explained his business with frank cynicism, whitewashed himself to his own satisfaction, and left Adrienne fascinated, shocked, and, somehow, wanting badly to go home and brush her teeth.

Now and then some man or woman would quote a bit of erotic poetry, or a clever—and invariably sensuous—reflection upon life from some foreign author, or would tell some incident enforcing his own view of soul and sex. But mostly it was Sarah who held the

floor. She had either thought more than the other women had, or else she was a more fluent and indefatigable talker. The men seemed invariably content to let Sarah's luring voice break into pearls of speech—black pearls, Adrienne thought. They got closer and closer to her, and looked at her with adoring eyes. In the daytime, Sarah might have to take orders from Adrienne's aunt, but at night, surely, she had her world at her feet.

The next day, after Sarah was free to leave her usual grind of answering invitations and begging letters, she went to Adrienne's study to be admired. But Adrienne, reflective over a cigarette, was slow with her plaudits.

"You told me I didn't know how to think, Sarah," she remarked, "but that crowd of yours last night started me. In the first place, what's the matter with your men?"

"Matter with our men?"

"I hope you don't call those shrimps you had real men? That painter, Richard Grayle, was the only one at all possible. The women were away ahead of them."

"Women always are," Sarah replied. "Look at your own circle. You consider Sears Oldham the superior of Richard Grayle, of course. But it's easier for your girls to find Grayles than Oldhams."

Adrienne nodded reflectively.

"I don't know what becomes of the big men of circles like mine," she said. "But as to circles like yours—why is it? Do they give up free ideas and frank radical companions as soon as they get a little worldly success?"

Sarah reddened angrily, and Adrienne saw that she had hit upon a shrewd truth.

"My view, Sarah," she pursued, "is that none of those people in your crowd have really arrived. The reason they haven't arrived is that they spend so much energy talking—talking about sex

and things. When they keep their lips tight and begin to work and achieve success, they are thrown with prosperous and unradical people. They forget about their soul and sex germs, and they buy motor cars. So the kind of men left to you are just failures and degenerates and beardless adventure seekers and——"

"You're talking nonsense, Adrienne!" said Sarah crossly.

"Besides," continued Adrienne calmly, "why do you want to play the man's game for him? That game you people are playing is not for the human race in general or for women. It's only men who get anything out of it."

"I'd like to know how you make that out?" protested Sarah. "The women are just as free as the men."

"But in all these irregular unions," Adrienne said, "don't the men usually get tired first?"

"I don't know that they do," said Sarah, so reluctantly that Adrienne knew that they did. "But, even so, a true woman glories in paying the price of freedom."

"Oh, yes, yes. It's so much pleasure to have nervous prostration," said Adrienne ironically, "and one and another of those lady friends of yours is always getting it. You've told me so. A man leaves a woman; she heroically tries to interest herself in work, but breaks down. It's a year or more before she is fit to attract another man, and when she does attract him, he's generally a cut below the level of the last—older and plainer and with less money to hand over."

Sarah looked reproachful scorn.

"For some years now," Adrienne said mildly, "I've stood off and watched the procession, and I've come to see that men know how to take care of their emotional comfort—their sex and soul, you know. And it's only because the best of them have tried to take care of women that we've got these marriage



vows and so on to secure our emotional comfort."

"You are absolutely narrow, illiberal, and a besottedly clinging vine," Sarah said. "But to leave logic, and come down to cases, look at me! Until I got interested in—in freedom——"

"In sex and soul," interrupted Adrienne.

"Until then, no man ever paid the least attention to me," Sarah said. "And look at me now! They begin coming at seven o'clock in the evening and keep ringing the bell till midnight. I can't stretch forth my hand without touching a masculine hand ready to grasp mine. I've never had a chance at any real experiences while I was saying 'prunes and prisms' for your aunt."

"Offers?" cried Adrienne eagerly.

"Well—not the kind you mean," said Sarah, "but lots and lots of them. Men make love to me like—like— Well, they make love to me."

Adrienne's eyes were ravenously curious, but there are certain questions that no conservative can ask, and no radical would dream of asking those same questions, since it is a primal code of radicals that people's personal relations are nobody's business. So Adrienne, sighing, was silent, but her face demanded vociferously, and Sarah's face said that if she cared to, there was a lot she could tell.

"Every woman has the right to emotional life," said Sarah, in a tone of reminiscent reverie, "and if she can not get it by one route, she can by another."

Adrienne stiffened and let her cigarette burn her fingers. Then and there she got her great inspiration. Sears Oldham couldn't be caught by any wile, couldn't he? He had had to fall back on the fib that he believed in free love, had he? Oldham, of all men the most conservative! He'd have to be chloroformed, and he knew the look of the sponge, did he? Well, a discreet girl of twenty-eight had nothing to lose by

deserting old paths, and at least she could have the advantage of adapting a new means to her game.

Adrienne got rid of Sarah and sat down to her old problem. She wanted to be married; Oldham wanted to keep from being married. He used a new scheme to keep from being snared; she would take that same scheme to snare him. The next time he dropped in to afternoon tea, she had a gown that showed to perfection her beautiful bare arms. By means of the verbal jugglery known to all clever women, she had soon led the talk to freedom.

"It's the crying need of the age," said Adrienne, in a voice that had in it hints of Sarah's coo. "Particularly is more freedom needed for men. We hamper you, Sears. You are the nobler, the higher part of the race. We limit you. We try to stake you down to one little matrimonial plot, when what we ought to give you, Sears, is more sex freedom."

"Oh, Lord!" cried Oldham, but not with pious intent.

He was genuinely shocked, until he looked into Adrienne's wide, remote eyes. Then he saw that she was quite unaware of him, concerned only with her ideas. Adrienne contrived that he saw that.

"Life isn't life, as the average man and woman live it," Adrienne said. "So few of them are big enough to think and to live by their thoughts. If people were only big enough, why should a few words gabbled over them by a clergyman mean anything?"

"You—you don't mean that, Adrienne!" gasped Oldham, fascinated and horrified. "You don't mean you'd—you'd——"

He couldn't say it; no rules of conversation with débutantes or with nice women of any age had instructed Oldham as to how to handle daring ideas.

"Of course I'm not thinking of myself in connection with all this, and of

course my age for really caring for a man is past," said Adrienne, in a tone of simple sincerity, "but if I should meet a man who was big enough, and if he loved me well enough, and I didn't have any one else to consider, I should walk straight out of this house without any thought of ring or book."

She was giving Oldham the freshest sensation he had had for years. It was so fresh and strong that he was not even self-conscious about it. All he knew was that Adrienne was interesting him as he had not been interested since he had fallen in love with her eight years before and then fallen out. He listened to her flowing voice and watched her white, weaving arms and her unconscious eyes, and he moved a little nearer her, even as Sarah's men moved nearer Sarah. Adrienne's voice never wavered, but her keen brain registered the first score against Oldham.

"Go on, Adrienne," said Oldham, impressed. "I—I didn't know you were so big-minded, upon my soul!"

It was the least he could say, reflected Adrienne, since she had been glorifying men at the expense of women for a good half hour.

"Oh—big-minded," she said deprecatingly. "I've never spoken of these things before. I wish every one were like you, Sears."

"Well, you're safe in talking to me," he said nobly.

Adrienne looked at him with simple eyes.

"I only hope I shall find others like you with whom I can discuss these things, Sears," she said, with sweet impersonality.

Oldham did not quite like that, but Adrienne did not let him rest upon it long. She went on discussing sex and soul, not so baldly as Sarah had—more delicately, with turns of thought more subtly flattering to Oldham. For Sarah was honestly interested in her ideas, while Adrienne was interested in

Oldham. When he left, Adrienne executed a little *pas seul* of amusement and triumph. For Oldham had been so absorbed that he'd forgotten to think of any moves in any game. He had been completely off guard, as defenceless as in his callow youth. He'd probably wax cynical or skeptical or cautious, presently, but for the moment she had hit home, and she shrewdly guessed that the impression she had made would not be eradicated so easily as his ordinary social impressions.

That impression lasted and deepened. Oldham was honestly interested, not at first in Adrienne's ideas, but in the fact that she had them. Then by degrees he became interested in the ideas. They were not precisely new to him, but the illustrations Adrienne furnished were, and were so pleasantly akin to gossip that they attracted him tremendously. Before long he was quite as fluent as Adrienne on sex-and-soul ideas. He told her that, at bottom, what she said was what all large-minded men thought, but very few women. Women were cowards, were hampered by a passion to be safe. Before long, Adrienne was pointing out to Oldham that by herself this big thought, or that, would not have occurred to her. She was sitting at his feet, as the *débutantes* had tried to sit—only Oldham had gently repudiated them, knowing so well all the moves of the game!

"I suppose you can talk to me just as if I were another man," Adrienne said once.

As she spoke, she remembered how, at twenty, she had said to him that she wished she could be friends with him, as if she were a man, or he a girl, and he had said it was impossible. Every girl says that to some man or to every man she knows, and each man makes the same reply.

"No, I don't talk to you as if you were another man," Oldham said. "I talk to you without any thought of sex."

Did he, indeed! Well, hardly, reflected Adrienne. Aloud she said:

"Now we have really arrived, Sears! Now we are archradicals, when we can talk to each other without consciousness of sex!"

"I—I don't know that I always want to," said Oldham, who, off guard, was really honest.

"Oh, yes!" pleaded Adrienne. "For otherwise we'd be just like any one else."

They were not like any one else—oh, no indeed; they commented with a sweet, superior charity upon the conventional events in the lives of their conventional friends. Sometimes, when unradical, pathetically brain-bound remarks were made in their presence, they shot each other a quick glance of critical comprehension. Glances like that help people into a closer sympathy with each other. Adrienne saw, exultingly, that without knowing what he was about, Oldham was getting almost as much interested in her as if he were in love with her.

Spring had come, and they were able to be more in the open air. This was an advantage to Adrienne, for oxygen in her lungs always added to her allure. Now, too, she felt, was the moment to introduce the other man. For some time, she had had him in mind—Richard Grayle. He should paint her picture; she would get him other commissions. He would be grateful to her, maybe more. At any rate, she could use him to make Oldham jealous. For, after all, the old game has got to be played by some of the old rules.

As she had assumed, it was easy to pick up Richard Grayle. It is an exceptional man who cares more for ideas than for worldly success, and Grayle was not of the stuff to prove the exception. He was thrilled at the prospect of painting the portrait of high-placed Adrienne Blake. Dreams of other portraits wafted into his brain, and

when he found that this sitter, who was to prove the first stepping-stone in his fortune, was interested in him and his advanced ideas, he poured them forth, liberally. Also, he fell in love with Adrienne.

This suited her exactly. She would have sacrificed him unhesitatingly to her own greed for Oldham, but, of course, she told herself, it would not come to that. A little devotion to her would help the portrait, and, anyhow, wasn't she making his everlasting career for him? Of course she had the right to use him. She did use him. She introduced him to Oldham, threw them together as much as she could, and quoted Grayle's striking ideas to Oldham when Grayle was not there.

Oldham did not like this at all. Somehow he thought it highly improper for Adrienne to be discussing free love with any man but himself—particularly one of those artist chaps who had such queer, unreliable ideas, anyhow. He perceived that Grayle was in love with Adrienne, and he thought this an impertinence. That was the worst of picking up these fine-arts people—never missed a chance of proposing to a nice-girl with money. Grayle, however, was not the only man at whom Oldham looked with a jaundiced eye. For, somehow, since he and Grayle had begun to find Adrienne attractive, other men had, too. Adrienne used them judiciously. She made haste to assure Oldham that he and Grayle were the only ones with whom she discussed real ideas.

"For," she said, "no one else is high-brained enough to understand."

Sometimes it seemed to Adrienne as if surely her plans would drop to pieces. How could Sears Oldham have fallen for that stuff! It only served to convince her that men at bottom are the children that old women tell us they are. Also, she agreed with the old English novelist that any woman could

get any man she put her mind on. She could, Adrienne amended, if she was clever enough to adopt a perfectly new lure.

Yes, Oldham was plainly in love with her. The next point was to bring him to a declaration. Adrienne thought he would never get around to it. Of course Oldham had to be true to their high sex-and-soul principles; of course. It was all right to think about it, but when it came to putting in cold words to Adrienne a liberal emotional proposition, Oldham for a long time balked. Underneath his disillusion, his cynical acceptance of the social game of marriage—hunt and capture—he was really an idealist. It was not natural to him to make to Adrienne or to any other girl the sort of proposal which Sarah Walters' archradicals made to her. He hesitated so long that Adrienne was almost in despair. When he did begin haltingly to speak, she grasped his idea with a quickness that ought to have aroused his suspicions. But he was so thankful to be spared further words that he had no energy left for suspicion.

"Oh, Sears," she said, in sweet surprise, "I never dreamed of this! I thought you had somehow got past the possibility of caring for any one deeply. I want you to think this over before you go further. For you must care very thoroughly for me before I could even consider letting my own feelings out of leash. If you do so deeply, I shall consider it a wonderful honor."

Some dissatisfied scruple made Oldham feel as if she ought to consider it a wonderful insult. Adrienne looked at his discomfited face with clear eyes.

"Be very sure, dear Sears, that you care enough, that you feel I am worthy of this deep love you may come to offer," she said. "But if you do—and then if I do—what an education for our souls it will be to let the whole world go by!"

She was very careful not to speak in definite words of freedom and sex. She did not, for example, suggest that if she came to love him, as soon as he wished to be free, he must go. She did not allude to the way Sarah's arch-radical ladies, wishful to lean over backward, introduced other charming, unattached ladies to their men, fairly bedeviling and baffling them with freedom. No, Adrienne did not want to have anything to take back or explain.

Meanwhile, she told him, again with an air of sweet surprise, that Grayle loved her, just as dear Sears did. Oldham made a frightful scene.

"The cad!" he cried. "To dare!"

When Adrienne concealed her delight with a face of amazement, Oldham explained that he didn't mind Grayle's proposition; it wasn't that. Simply he didn't believe Grayle was a big enough man to feel a large, free love. He mistook his feelings—that was all—and was ready to make Adrienne pay for it. Adrienne smiled inwardly. How very anxious dear Sears was to protect her from a love that wasn't big enough!

"Dear Sears," she said to him in a honeyed voice, "do you know that I feel as if I am on the eve of a great experience?"

Indeed, she trusted that she was. She hoped she was on the eve of marrying the most desirable after-thirty bachelor of her set.

"It's a strange, inspirational sort of feeling," she said. "I know that I am on the verge of the most sweeping emotion of my life."

Oldham blushed. He did not know which would be worse—for her to refuse his free-love offering or to accept it. As to tolerating that cad Grayle—it was unthinkable! He began to make love to Adrienne as ardently as if his intentions had been honorable. He was tired of suspense.

A few days later, Adrienne, feeling

that suspense had lasted long enough, showed him a deeply melancholy face.

"Dearest Sears," she said, "I told you once that if I had only myself to consider, I'd never hesitate about the ring and the book——"

"I know you did," he interrupted; he hated that phrase.

"Oh, Sears," she said tearfully, "I feel—I know I could love you with the greatest love any woman ever had for a man. I could put you so far first that my whole joy would be to do exactly what you wanted. I should never crave my own way, for it would be your way. And when I think of your wonderful mind, your splendid character, your inimitable personality—oh, it is hard then to remember that for your sake I must turn to Grayle!"

It took Oldham a little while to get the words straight. Then he had to ask her to explain the idea.

"It is a matter," said Adrienne, "that I have suffered over. If I entered the higher union with you, it would separate you from your friends, your pursuits. You would lose caste. I could bear it for myself, but I do not think I could bear it for you."

Somewhat to Adrienne's disappointment, Oldham argued that if she could give up the world, he could, too—that she must not doubt the quality of his love; if she could make a sacrifice for him, he could for her.

"I do not doubt the nobility and fineness of your character," Adrienne said softly. "I know you can make a sacrifice, but I cannot let you make it for me. You should have everything in the world, everything—what you have now and the woman you love. While if I join Grayle——"

Oldham uttered a hoarse protest.

"If I go to Grayle," said Adrienne, with firm sweetness, "he will have no caste to lose, for all his friends think as we do."

Oldham's face was apoplectic. The

rage he ought to have felt against Adrienne he transferred to Grayle. If he just had that fellow's crazy neck between his two hands! A man like that to have the colossal impudence to approach a sincere, childlike soul, such as Adrienne, and propose—— No caste to lose! Of course he hadn't, the pup!

"It's you I'm thinking of, my—my own!" sobbed Adrienne.

Tears were a new experience to Oldham. He had always been so skillful that no woman had ever got so far as tears with him. In anguish he took her in his arms.

"Couldn't we both make a sacrifice," he begged, "a mutual sacrifice? Couldn't we get married? Divorce is so easy if—— Only I *know* I'll never want to leave you!"

"But our—our principles!" she murmured, clinging closer.

"Oh, damn the principles!" Oldham said. "If you think I could leave you a prey to Grayle——"

"Let me think," said Adrienne, not releasing her hold for a moment. "This is a matter of conscience with me."

"Darling, I'll leave it to your conscience," he said, "but think hard, and think now!"

He was quite safe in leaving it to Adrienne's conscience! Adroitly she turned in his arms so that her lovely lips slipped against his cheek. Then she said:

"After all, we need not forsake our principles. Perhaps we'd be more free to help the world if we yielded to convention——"

"My darling!" cried Oldham. "We'll give the engagement to the papers tonight, so that cad Grayle——"

"Never mind him. I don't want even to think of ideas—just of wonderful you," sighed Adrienne, relaxing against him. She deserved to relax, poor girl, for she'd won in the hardest of games with a man who was sure he knew all the moves.



# The Neglected Garden

By Henry C. Rowland

Author of "The Closing Net," "Auld Jeremiah," etc.



## CHAPTER I.

WYNNE STUART threw down her light fly rod, unslung her creel, and, flinging herself at full length on the cool moss, stared up at the motionless foliage. It was about as hot a day as Nova Scotia can produce, which is saying a good deal. Wynne's tweed wading skirt was wet and heavy, and, with a little gurgle of impatience, she slipped it off and tossed it aside. Thus more comfortably disposed in a light, gray flannel sailor blouse and baggy pantlets, which buckled just above her knees, she clasped her hands behind her shock of wavy, black hair, and frowned resentfully at the world at large.

For Wynne's soul was hot with an anger that not even her favorite sport had been able to cool. Her brooding gray eyes, behind their long, black, half-closed lashes, suggested the blade of a steel knife lying in the sun, and the flush of her cheeks was that of wrath rather than of exertion. The girl looked highly charged with some dangerous explosive, and the savage little gusts of resentment milling through her mind spun and eddied faster than the frothing spume that eddied at her feet.

"The beast! Oh, the thieving old

beast!" muttered Wynne aloud, for, like many persons who are much alone, she had formed the habit of audible expression of thought. "It's not enough to swindle me out of my fortune, but now he must go and marry that hussy!" She dug at a tuft of moss with a vicious kick of her hobnailed heel; then sat up and clasped her hands in front of her plump woolen-stockinged knees. "I've a good mind to clear out and go seek my fortune the best way I can. It's bad enough to have a swine of a stepfather swindling me out of everything, without having this beast of a woman brought to the house!"

Wynne had been bitterly grieved when her mother, a widow almost from Wynne's birth, had finally yielded to the stubborn insistence of one Angus Clegg, who had, in the course of years, succeeded in placing her big estate on a highly profitable basis. The man had always been for Wynne a coarse and common creature, with whom it was impossible to have any sympathy. Clegg had never been actually unkind to Wynne, nor was he as stingy with her as might have been expected in a man of his nature. Perhaps he threw a sop to certain rudiments of conscience in the matter of her spending money. He



claimed that the property would certainly have gone to pot but for his own hard work and shrewd management, and this Wynne was unable to deny. He might even have tried to marry her, after her mother's death, but for the fear of "what folks might say" and the sure knowledge that Wynne would sooner have drowned herself. Clegg was not an imaginative man; he was merely one of those grasping, avaricious individuals, found in every community, who manage to absorb most of the money of the region, along with the fear, hatred, and respect of their neighbors.

For some time Wynne had pondered on the problem of how she might earn a living. The idea of becoming a trained nurse had occurred to her, as had also that of being a companion or nursery governess. She had received a good school education, supplemented by much reading of a mixed character, had spoken French from childhood, and was a fair musician, but these accomplishments did not seem sufficient to qualify her as a teacher of more than elementary courses. The idea of matrimony had also occurred to her, but she had never met any man whom she would have married at any price, and there seemed slight prospect of her doing so. She believed that such a mate as she might favor would disdain a simple country girl like herself, orphaned and portionless. Still, the idea was rather fascinating, and on this first hot day of early spring, with all nature about its prospective fruition, she found a certain pleasure in its indulgence.

Overhead, hidden by the fresh foliage, a wild dove was cooing seductively, and as she listened to the elusive sound, a fluttering in the boughs above her seemed to indicate that it had not called in vain. Across the brook, in a wild-apple tree, a lady red squirrel rushed around and around the trunk in

a vertiginous burst of coquetry, closely followed by an ardent suitor. So swiftly they spun that it was impossible to tell which was the pursuer and which the pursued. Wynne watched the little creatures, her sympathies all with the pursued.

"I wouldn't run like that," she reflected, with a bitter smile.

She moved restlessly, then stretched herself at length, her hands clasped behind her head, and stared up at the soft, blue, cloudless sky, seeking distraction from certain troublesome emotions set stirring by the sweet spring odors of moss and fern and flower and the sylvan wooing on every side. But there was no solace to be found even in this contemplation of the infinite. High in the blue ether, a tiny speck soared in weaving arcs, and the faint cry of an osprey pierced the murmur of the brook. It was answered from a distance, and presently another mote drifted into sight. The two called and answered, drawing gradually together like two floating particles caught in an eddy and ever approaching the vortex, until finally they planed away to some remote fastness, there to terminate their courtship.

Wynne stared after them resentfully.

"Love, love, nothing but love—for everything but me," she sighed. "I wonder if my turn will ever come."

Just upstream from where she had stopped to rest, a tiny brooklet came whispering down to pay its tithe to the little river. It formed a still, deep pool, a Diana's mirror. With a sudden impulse, Wynne reached up and twisted her hair snugly about her head, tore open the neck of her blouse to its widest angle, and, stepping to the edge of the pool, dropped on her hands and knees and stared critically at the clear reflection. The loveliest face in Nova Scotia stared back at her. She studied the broad white forehead, the long, gray, misty eyes with their double fringe of

black, curving lashes, and the black, delicately penciled eyebrows with their outward and upward slant. With the impersonal scrutiny of one appraising a piece of merchandise, she examined the little classic nose with its slight upward tilt, the full, fresh lips, resolute chin, round, creamy throat, and full white bosom. Then she sighed.

"I wonder if I really look like that," thought Wynne. "If I do, I ought to manage somehow."

She was still staring in a fascinated way at the ravishing image when her quick ears were caught by a sound to which they were well accustomed—the singing of a reel. Then came a splash, a mild expletive, and Wynne sprang up, startled, to find that the high gods had not forgotten her.

## CHAPTER II.

For a full hour, Lorimer Stirling had whipped the stream in vain. The more he whipped it, the naughtier it grew, mocking and laughing at these futile flagellations like a rollicking child chastised in play with a stalk of wheat, refusing merrily to give up any of its playthings.

Then Lorrie began to get hot and angry, and walloped it with his rod as well as his line, and occasionally he slipped and sat down where the water was shallow and the stones carefully placed with their points upward; all of which was vexatious, as there was probably no man in Nova Scotia who knew as much about rivers as Lorrie. Rivers were his friends and his enemies. When they were good, he blessed them and set them to work, and when they were bad, he dammed them and measured their heads and put them in solitary confinement until such time as they might have become disciplined.

One or two rivers, notably the Chagres, had even been Lorrie's mistress for a while and threatened at

times to become so again. For the most part, he had managed to enslave such as he had dealings with and make them obedient to his will. From which it may be gathered that Lorrie's profession was that of hydraulic engineer.

But oddly enough, for all his experience with rivers, Lorrie knew almost nothing about fly-fishing. His business had always been with the stream rather than with its tenants, which often profited by his rearrangement of their premises. When he had gone fishing, it had usually been with the humble worm as bait and tackle of the most primitive sort.

On the present occasion, he was taking a badly needed rest from five years' arduous work on the Panama Canal. In New York he had hunted up an old friend and college mate, the Reverend James O'Connor, a jovial, big-hearted man of independent means, who had devoted his life to settlement work, with some reference to city politics. The "Reverend Jim," as he was universally known, was about to take a well-earned vacation himself, and had carried Lorrie off to Nova Scotia with him for a fishing trip.

But it cannot be said that Lorrie was particularly enjoying his holiday. For the first time in his active life, he had begun to feel the vague lack of something impossible to describe. Although the rest and change of the invigorating northern air had fortified his blood, thinned from the enervating tropics, he was conscious of a peculiar nervousness and discontent that baffled and irritated him. He ate with relish, slept like a healthy child, and felt generally as physically fit as it is possible for a vigorous young man of thirty, with a clear conscience and no vices, possibly to feel. In fact, he felt, if such a thing can be, too fit for perfect peace, and this strange new restlessness and sense of incompletion were augmented daily by his picturesque and beautiful sur-

roundings. A fresh, glorious sunrise, a subdued and wistful twilight, or some wild and romantic bit of woodland or river, instead of arousing pleasurable appreciation, infused him with a sort of brooding melancholy.

"Must be liver," thought Lorrie irritably, and took a pill of which he stood in not the slightest need and which merely served to upset his perfectly normal inside.

Then, as the invigorating nights and soft spring days seemed only to aggravate his peculiar morbid symptoms, he consulted the Reverend Jim, who laughed.

"We all go through that," said he, and added oracularly, "It is not good for man to live alone."

"Don't be an ass, Jim!" said Lorrie crossly. "I'm not in love, if that's what you mean."

"That's just the trouble," said the Reverend Jim, cheerfully engaged in whipping a split tip. "You're not in love and never have been. If you had, you'd recognize the symptoms, just as you can tell when you're going to have a little touch of fever. Only it won't be a little touch with you, when it comes. You'll swell up like the Chagres in flood and smash everything that happens to be in the way."

He threw an admiring glance at Lorrie's strong, virile face and masterful jaw. Lorrie was not a big man—five feet ten at a pinch—but broad of shoulder, small of waist and hip, with plenty of tough fiber, which his clean-cut leanness rather accentuated. His habitual expression was pleasant and friendly, but not good-natured. It was rather that of a man who knows his business and how to do it and how to make other people under his direction do it, too. His general type was distinctly Anglo-Saxon—intent blue eyes, thick chestnut hair with a bit of a curl to it when damp, and trim ears flat to his head.

He shoved his hands into the side

pockets of his Norfolk jacket and frowned resentfully at the Reverend Jim, whose square, ruddy face was bent over his work. There was a twinkle in the corner of the clergyman's agate eyes.

"Yes, my little boy," said he, skillfully securing the end of his thread—the Reverend Jim was an ardent fisherman and loved to overhaul his gear—"you'll go off with a bang some day when the right lady lights the match. You've been gathering too much head and no spillway. The sooner, the better, say I."

"Huh!" grunted Lorrie. "You talk like a buck old maid!"

"Better to marry than to burn," quoted the Reverend Jim, reaching for the shellac.

"I'm not burning."

"Well, then, better to marry than to freeze."

"I'm not freezing, either. Nice-looking chump I'd be to get married and lug a wife down there to grill on the Zone! There are too many fool women there as it is." And he strode off sulkily.

Nevertheless, these parables stuck in his head, and now, as he slipped and stumbled down the tricky little river, with his flies streaming out ahead of him, he was thinking that, after all, there might be a good deal in life aside from fluvographs and deep alluvial borings and caissons and cement-core dams and the like. Whether because of that new-born sense of incompleteness in what had hitherto filled his life, or because of certain impulses in the spring air, his habitually technical mind began to show signs of insubordination and to dwell on such fragments of romances as he had read at times in magazines and novels, not without a certain half-amused contempt. It occurred to him that if he were a novelist, instead of an hydraulic engineer, he would have selected just such a place as this for the

wonderful hero to come upon the marvelous heroine, lying in a foot of water with a sprained ankle, or most indiscreetly bathing in a moss-rimmed pool.

Then he rounded the shoulder of a big rock, and the thing happened. The heroine was not precisely bathing, but the neck of her blouse was most indiscreetly open, and she was lying with her head toward Lorrie, resting on her elbows and studying her image in the tourmaline reflection of the sheltered pool.

Wynne was not indulging herself in a mere contemplation of her charms. She was splashing the water on her throat with one hand and wondering in a vague sort of way why, at a certain time of the year, all the little caterpillars begin to walk up the trunks of the trees, and all the little frogs begin to shrill in the swamps, and the turtles come out of the mud, and human beings like herself get so restless.

She was turning these problems in her mind when she heard the splash that Lorrie made as he sat down suddenly, followed by the singing of his reel as the patriarch trout of the stream took one of his silly flies and felt the sting of the hook. This wise and experienced old fish of jaded appetites had been reposing himself in a sort of trout café behind a big bowlder, and it may have been that he liked his delicacies out of season, or perhaps he was merely irritated at having his siesta interrupted by a big, bungling white moth. Whatever the cause, he snapped it up viciously and, at the prick of the hook, flew into a perfect spasm of rage.

Lorrie, rapt in an astonished contemplation of the nymph at the pool, was thinking of anything but trout, and the buzzing of his reel woke him up like an alarm clock going off against his ear. He gripped his line instinctively and snubbed, but, being most insecurely balanced on a slippery stone, his feet shot out from under him and

he sat down with a splash and a startled "Damn!" Then, as he floundered there, Wynne bounded to her feet with a gasp, her gray eyes wide with the shock of the interruption. Under ordinary circumstances, her first thought would naturally have been of her negligee—skirtless, her blouse open at the throat, its sleeves pushed back to her strong, round shoulders. But before her mind could dwell on these conventional details, there came a gleam and a flash from the pool in front of her as the big trout made a desperate leap, and all other considerations were swept away in the excitement of the battle. Wynne knew that trout and had tried for him many, many times in vain. He had mocked her from the clear depths of his brook parlor and had once or twice accepted her challenge, beaten her to a sodden mass, and cost her much of her scant pocket money in fishing tackle.

Now, from the futility of his furious rushes, she saw that he was well hooked; also that the handsome intruder on her privacy at the other end of the line was far from being an Izaak Walton. Lorrie was skating around on the flat, slippery stones, his rod held high, trying frantically to reel in the slack of his line, while the dryad on whom he had almost stumbled hopped up and down on the bank with frenzied exclamations of advice.

"All right! I'm all right!" he gasped. "I've got him," reeling in so fast that sometimes he missed the turn and went the other way.

"But you haven't got him!" shrieked Wynne. "Here he comes at you! Give him the butt and get over here on the bank! There he goes down again! Give him a little line!" Don't point your rod at him like that!"

"The darn' reel's all fouled up," panted Lorrie, plucking impotently at the loose bights.

"Then follow him! Look out! Here

he comes again! Don't let him get over there behind those stones! If he manages to get the line jammed, you've lost him! Reel in—quick!”

Lorrie tried to obey, but the reel was jammed. He grabbed at the line and began to take in slack until the loose bight was swirling down ahead of him. Then, in the midst of his anguish, the dryad splashed in at his elbow. He was vaguely conscious of the flashing of white bare arms and a flushed, excited face.

“Let me take the loose line,” the girl said, “and you try to clear your reel, and be quick about it! There he goes behind that big boulder! I've lost him three times that way.”

Lorrie, working desperately, managed to clear his reel. Meanwhile, the crafty old veteran of many such duels had got a half turn around the corner of a big rock and, his strength by this time being for the moment unequal to a rush that might snap line or leader, was working industriously with tongue and jaw to disengage the hook, at which technique he was adept.

He was making good progress at this when his tormenter came splashing over after him. The line cleared and tautened, and off he went downstream again. His rushes grew feebler. His mouth, held open by the hook, was letting the water down his throat, and he felt himself getting logy and unable to endure the strain. Heavy, inert, and half water-logged, the patriarch of the stream was towed slowly toward the bank. He saw the fatal landing net glide under him, as Wynne, her face aglow and her breath on Lorrie's cheek, unhooked it and leaned forward.

“What a whopper!” gasped Lorrie.

“Yes,” Wynne answered, slowly and without enthusiasm. “He'll be the record for this stream.”

She reached down, slid her hand under the net, and raised the fish, and as she did so, it gave a little quiver and

the hook dropped out. Wynne stared for a moment at the palpitating victim and then, turning the net, slid the trout back into the stream, where, caught by a friendly eddy, it sculled wearily to a haven of repose.

Lorrie turned and stared at her in amazement. For a moment Wynne's gray eyes met his defiantly; then the long dark lashes swept down and she looked away.

“Why did you do that?” Lorrie asked.

There was no anger in his voice, but a curious vibration. Something in Wynne's face and the tones of her low-pitched voice made him forget about his triumph. Wynne, still unconscious of her dishabille, looked down and kicked a loose stone into the pool.

“I don't know,” she faltered. “It didn't seem fair—two of us against one fish. He'd have beaten either one of us alone. Besides, I've known him such a long time. Are you angry?” She looked up at him rather shyly.

Another thrill swept through Lorrie. Wynne saw the sudden light in his eyes, and the color flamed up to her face.

“No,” he answered, scarcely realizing what he said. “I don't think I could be angry with a girl like you. Besides, it was your fish. I'd never have managed it without your help. I'm only a dub at the business. Do you live hereabouts?”

“Yes,” Wynne answered. “I'm a native of the place.”

“I thought you must be,” said Lorrie. “I never saw anybody like you before.”

Wynne gave him a swift, questioning look, and the blaze of admiration that she met startled and confused her. Also, it flashed across her mind that most fishermen would have been very sore at seeing the record trout of the stream turned back into the water after an agonizing struggle of ten or fifteen minutes; whereas this clear-eyed, pleas-



ant-voiced stranger seemed to take her impulsive act as quite fitting and proper. Wynne felt drawn to him, and his intense look of admiration, while it confused her, was by no means disagreeable. She responded to it with a sudden glow and a curious fluttering about her heart. She was glad that she pleased him as he did her. Then she glanced down at herself and gave a gasp of dismay.

"Oh, how dreadful!" she cried, and snatched at the neck of her blouse. "And my skirt——"

Lorrie laughed.

"I—I never thought——" stammered Wynne, her face aflame.

"Nor I," said Lorrie and, turning his back to her, he pulled off his felt hat, cupped the brim, scooped it full of the cold, sweet water, and drank slowly and with infinite relish. Then, without glancing in Wynne's direction, he sat himself upon a rock and proceeded to unjoint his rod. When he finally looked around, Wynne was trim as an otter and watching him with interest.

"Aren't you going to fish any more?" she asked.

"Nope."

"Why not?"

"Well," answered Lorrie, with a smile that showed a double row of very strong white teeth, "after having captured and ransomed the king of this stream"—he splashed over to the bank where Wynne was standing—"I've lost all interest in the small fry."

"How ransomed him?" Wynne asked.

"Let's sit down for a moment and rest and I'll explain," Lorrie answered, and something in his tone and the look of his eyes made Wynne feel very much younger and more feeble than she would have thought possible. She obeyed him, and they sat on the mossy bank side by side.

"What's your name?" he asked abruptly.

"Wynne Stuart."

"Mine's Lorimer Stirling. I'm an engineer on the Panama Canal, off for a vacation. Do you live here all the time?"

"Of course I do," Wynne answered. "Where else could I live?"

"Well," said Lorrie slowly, "you might live in lots of other places."

"Yes," Wynne agreed, "I might. Perhaps I shall. I was thinking about that very thing when you came tumbling down the brook. But it's not so easy as you say."

"Why?"

"Oh, because of a whole lot of things that wouldn't interest you."

"Yes, they would, Wynne," Lorrie answered.

Wynne tried to stiffen a bit at this familiarity, but his free use of her name seemed quite unconscious. Although a big girl and sweetly maturing, Wynne's face had a certain expression of childish inexperience that belied her nineteen years; that is to say, the lower part of it had, by virtue of the little nose, with its slight tilt, and the red, pouting lips of infancy. The upper part was as mature as one could wish, with its accentuated brows and steady, intent gray eyes.

Lorrie saw the suspicion of a frown and the look of doubt.

"Do you mind my calling you by your first name?" he asked.

"Oh—I don't suppose so," Wynne answered. "What does it matter? But I'm really no longer a little girl, you know."

"I know, but I spoke without thinking," Lorrie said. "I'm tired after my bath."

Wynne laughed.

"When I looked up and saw you splashing around, I felt like asking if you wouldn't like a cake of soap," said she.

"It wasn't that skookum trout that knocked me over," Lorrie laughed. "I don't know much about mythology—



it wasn't included in my education—but it seemed as if I'd butted in on Diana's pool, and that you might look up and turn me into a stag or a tree or something of the sort."

"Have you been here long?" Wynne asked.

"No. Just came. I belong to the engineer outfit at work on the 'big ditch'—the Panama Canal, you know. I'm on my vacation now. A friend of mine in New York, a clergyman, was just starting on a fishing trip up here, and he carried me along with him. He's fishing downstream behind me—ought to be here pretty soon, though he's probably taking his time and working the pools that I've been floundering around in. This is a beautiful country of yours, Wynne, if you don't mind my calling you that. It must be pretty sad in the winter, though."

"It's sad all the time for me," Wynne answered, without thinking much of what she said.

"Why?" Lorrie asked abruptly.

Wynne dug her heels into the moss.

"Oh—because," she answered.

"I wish you'd tell me why, if you don't mind."

Wynne hesitated. She yearned for a confidant, and for some reason this natural, pleasant-spoken person, who had just come plunging and splashing into her loneliness, inspired trust and confidence.

"There isn't much to tell," she answered, rather shyly. "It's only that I'm all alone in the world and dependent on a stepfather I don't like, and now he's going to marry a horrid woman that I despise."

Lorrie looked at her thoughtfully.

"Are you fond of the place?" he asked.

"I was," Wynne answered, "but I'm not now. I loathe it."

Lorrie nodded.

"I understand," said he. "You can't help but feel that way when every-

thing goes wrong. I grew up in a Massachusetts mill town. It wasn't a bad place, and about all of it belonged to my family, but after my father died, it went pretty well to pot. I was left an orphan, and my guardian was always nagging me about some fool thing. Never so glad as when I got out for good."

Wynne observed him with added interest.

"But it wasn't so hard for you, because you were a man and had a profession," said she. "It's quite different for me."

"Have you ever made any plans?" Lorrie asked.

"I've tried to, but it's not a bit of use. What can I do?" She flung out her arms. "I might be a nurse, I suppose, like so many of our poor Canadian girls, but I don't want to be a nurse. I could take care of anybody that belonged to me, or, in case of an emergency, I should try to do my share. But I can't stand the idea of spending my life in hospitals and sick rooms."

"Don't blame you," said Lorrie. "The mere smell of a hospital puts me all to the bad. I'd rather spend my time in a caisson and work under a pressure of three atmospheres and get the bends than lend a hand at an operation. I've done both, bends and all, but deliver me from sick people—unless, as you say, it happens to be a case of friends or family or some emergency, like a railroad accident or war or something of that sort. Then, of course, you lend a hand and do the best you can. But I don't blame you for not wanting to be a nurse."

"I might, though," Wynne answered. "What is it like in Panama?"

"Not so bad as most people imagine," Lorrie answered. "I must say, though, I'm glad my work down there is pretty nearly finished."

"What is your work like?" Wynne asked.

"Oh, well, I snoop around and see how things are going and make reports to the chief and get myself generally disliked—nothing very important."

"Are you going back soon?"

"In about a fortnight," Lorrie answered. The Reverend Jim was obliged to leave at the end of the week, but Lorrie had decided quite abruptly to prolong his vacation. Never mind about the Reverend Jim. "If I stay over, Wynne, could you manage to teach me how to fish?" He looked at her with his winning smile.

"I don't think I ought," she answered doubtfully. "You see, we've only met by accident."

"There's no such thing as accident," Lorrie answered. "Everything that happens is preordained. But if you feel that way about it, all we need to do is to wait until my friend, the Reverend James O'Connor, comes along. He's about the best man alive, and he's certainly the best-known and best-beloved minister in New York, for his work among the poor and people in need of help and advice. Being a minister and the good friend of everybody, he doesn't need an introduction. You'll realize that the minute you speak to him. He's known me for years, and he'll tell you that I'm a decent sort of chap, with no harm in me, and a perfectly safe pal for any girl."

"Oh, it isn't that," Wynne answered, rather shyly. "I know that you must be—nice. But I'm afraid it wouldn't look well. You've no idea how people talk in little places like this."

"I can imagine," Lorrie answered. "It's the same the world over. But it does seem a pity. I've never known many girls, and for the last five years I've scarcely spoken to a woman except for a few commonplace words. And now, just when I've met a girl that I really want to know awfully well—if you don't mind my saying so—it doesn't

seem fair that Mrs. Grundy should prevent."

He looked at her with a frown of resentment, and Wynne smiled, albeit with a little flutter about her heart. She liked his frank way of speaking, and this and his general appearance reminded her of a little boy. Not many people saw this boyish side of Lorrie's personality.

"I'm sorry," she answered gently, "but I really don't see how it could be managed. People *are* so beastly, and then there's my stepfather. He's the worst of all. It's pretty lonely for me, because there are very few people here that I care anything about. What interesting ones there are go away as soon as they get old enough—just as I probably shall. I'm afraid they think me rather snobbish and that I like to give myself airs, but it's really not that. They simply don't interest me. I'd rather fish or read or help about the house than do the things they like to do."

"But you must have some beaux," said Lorrie.

Wynne shook her head with a wry little smile.

"I never had a beau in my life," she said. "Of course, different men have tried to be nice from time to time, but I just couldn't stand them." She looked at him under lowered brows. "Somehow they don't seem to be my kind."

Lorrie nodded.

"I can easily understand that," he said, and with perfect truth. He could not picture such bucolic or tarry swains as he had encountered in the locality as possibly being of interest to this uncommon girl, with her wonderfully warm and vital beauty. He was deeply impressed with her low-pitched, softly modulated voice and cultured way of speaking, and her pretty accent, which was neither English nor American, but rather inclined to the former.

Leaning on his elbow, he led her on to talk about herself, asking now and then a leading question. Wynne needed but slight encouragement. She was famished for expression, and for some reason she felt immediately in strong sympathy with this handsome stranger. She liked his clear, steady eyes, masterful face, and perfect naturalness. Quite unconsciously, she told him of her family history, and Lorrie was not surprised to learn that her paternal grandfather had been a peer of the realm and her maternal grandfather a baronet. No wonder, he thought, that she should feel herself of different clay from the common stock that peopled the community, and that she should hold in abhorrence such a person as he pictured her stepfather to be. He was quick to discover, also, that she was unusually well read.

But throughout her discourse was woven an unconscious pathos that touched him deeply, indicating as it did her loneliness of heart and her wistful longing for a different sort of life. It was evident, also, that she was no meek and pliant maid, for here and there the even tenor of her monologue was broken by little gusts of hot resentment and the sudden flash of her gray eyes between their double row of black lashes. Long before she had finished speaking, Lorrie was entranced. He realized that he had never met such a girl before, and did not believe that he ever would again. His heart began to pound strangely as he listened and watched the changing emotions of her lovely, vital face, and wild ideas began to mill and effervesce in his usually cool and deliberate brain. It would not be going too far to say that he had fallen in love with Wynne at first sight, nor would he himself have denied it.

Wynne stopped speaking abruptly and glanced at him with a heightened color and a rather embarrassed little laugh.

"I don't know why I should bore you with all this," said she, and dropped her long lashes.

"You couldn't bore me if you tried," he answered. "You must feel that."

"It's your turn now," said she. "Tell me about Panama—about yourself. It's not often that I have a chance to hear about the outside world."

So Lorrie, in his pleasant voice, described his own rather lonely boyhood. He had been an orphan from infancy; and from twelve years of age until graduating from the Sheffield Scientific School, his life had been passed in school and college, with vacation periods spent at first in European travel with a tutor, and later, when the mill interests inherited from his father had undergone a serious decline, in rather discouraging efforts to augment his small income.

"I'm all right now, though," he concluded cheerfully. "I've put aside the whole of my salary in the last five years I've been working for the I. C. C., and in about another year, when the construction work ought to be finished, I'm going to strike out for something bigger. No trouble about getting it, I guess, with what rep I've managed to make down there by sticking strictly on the job. Trouble is, my case is something like your own—no fun or excitement—except of a darn' disagreeable sort when something fetches away—and feeling sort of lonely and incomplete when I've had time to stop and think. Do you know what I've been wishing the last day or two?" He looked at her and laughed, and a tinge of color showed beneath his tropic tan. "I've been wishing that I were married. Only, of course, the Zone is no place for a woman—or at least Culebra, where I'm stationed, isn't."

Wynne's eyes met his, and her own fresh cheeks reddened slightly.

"I've almost wished that myself, at times," she confessed naively. "Of

course one can't really wish it until one meets the right person, but sometimes it's rather nice to think about. It must be wonderful to feel that you have always somebody you love and who loves you." She gazed at the little river with rather misty eyes. "Marriage is a big chance, of course, but nothing could be much worse than deadly monotony and feeling that you're not wanted in your own home."

And then, at something that he saw in her lovely, wistful face, Lorrie—the calm and unemotional Lorrie, who had never been guilty of a rash and unconsidered act—experienced a sort of internal explosion that might be likened to the touching of a match to the fuse of a dynamite cartridge. Scarcely realizing the impulse that inspired him, he reached for Wynne's small, strong hand and held it firmly in his. Wynne was too startled to draw it away. Lorrie's blue eyes, suddenly intense, looked steadily into hers.

"Do you know, Wynne," said he, "I think that we two need each other? Of course, we've just met and scarcely know what the other one is really like, but of all the women I've known, there was never one that made me feel the way you do. I think you're a wonder. I'm crazy about you already."

Wynne stared at him wildly, quite unable to speak.

"Don't be frightened," said Lorrie gently. "I haven't gone off my head, and I'm not trying to flirt with you. I wouldn't know how. It's just that there's something about you that gets away with me. I want to know you better. We're going to be here for another ten days. Will you let me come to see you often—all the time? Whenever I like?"

"But—but——" Wynne could scarcely breathe for the sudden pounding of her heart.

"I know what you want to say," Lorrie interrupted, "that you don't know

me well enough and all that. The Reverend Jim can tell you all about me. Don't think for a moment that I'm trifling, Wynne. I warn you frankly that if I can manage to make you feel the need of me in the next ten days as much as I've got to feel the need of you in the last ten minutes, the Reverend Jim will have to marry us, and I'll take you straight off with me to Panama."

"But—how can I——"

"Listen, Wynne. You must like me a little already, or you wouldn't have stayed here to talk to me. Don't you think you might get to like me more? A whole lot? Enough, maybe, to take a chance, even if it is a whopping big one?"

Poor Wynne was fighting hard to get her composure, but the blaze in Lorrie's blue eyes seemed to make this harder every instant.

"Oh, but don't you see, Mr.——"

"Lorrie—just Lorrie."

"Well, then—Lorrie—how can I answer you? I never even saw you until about an hour ago."

"Nor I you," said Lorrie, "but it hasn't taken half that time to make me know that you're the dearest, sweetest girl in all the world and that I can't be happy without you. And I'm usually considered rather on the slow freight. Do you like me, Wynne?"

"I—yes, of course," Wynne murmured. "But you—you frighten me, Lorrie."

She looked at him in a sort of terror, but the blood was stealing back into her face. Lorrie squeezed her hand.

"There's nothing to be afraid of, you darling," said he. "It all rests with you to decide."

Wynne, who was looking dazedly upstream, drew her hand away quickly.

"Hush! Here comes somebody," said she.

A small boy was scrambling down along the bank, and as he approached,

it became evident that he was very hot, wet, and important. His trousers gave an impression of insecurity, the half of a suspender that was their sole support being fastened by means of a hole and a broken twig. But his official status was assured by a battered cap that was crammed down over his lop ears and proclaimed him a local Hermes of the postal telegraph. He discovered the pair from a distance and came squatting up, like a tired, but zealous, retriever.

"Please, sir," said he, "are you Mr. Stirling? Mr. *Lorimer* Stirling?"

"The same," said Lorrie, with a frown.

"Then here's a wire for you, sir."

"Thanks," said Lorrie in a dull voice. He took the message and handed the boy a coin. "How did you know where to find me?"

"I met your friend, the minister, and he told me that you'd gone down the brook. Any answer, sir?"

Lorrie was already glancing at the dispatch. Wynne, watching him, saw his mouth harden and his forehead contract.

"No," Lorrie answered slowly, "not this minute. I'll send it later."

"Thank you, sir," said the boy, and departed rejoicing, with Lorrie's liberal tip.

Lorrie handed the cablegram to Wynne.

"Now what do you think of that?" said he. "At this of all moments!"

Wynne took the slip of paper and read:

Everything going wrong. Another big slide and other troubles. Need you urgently. Try to catch Saturday's R. M. ship. Great necessity or would not spoil holiday. Fear another setback unless prompt measures taken. You only man can rely on at present. Don't fail me. Answer. COSTELLO.

"Then you've got to go right back to Panama?" she cried, with an unconscious note of dismay.

"I ought to. It would be welshing on my chief, and my best friend on the Zone, not to. All the same, I shan't—unless—" He paused and looked at her with an odd little smile.

"Unless what?" asked Wynne breathlessly.

"Unless you do one of two things—either decline to marry me at all—or else marry me this very day and go back with me."

"But if I don't—if I can't do either?" cried Wynne in distress.

"Then I shall stay—to the despair of the chief and the damage of my professional interests, to say nothing of the canal. If it has got to be a choice between the chance of winning you and no matter what else, I'll take the former. It's up to you, Wynne."

"But—Lorrie," cried Wynne, forgetting her shyness in her agitation, "how could I possibly marry you to-day?"

"The Reverend Jim can marry us," Lorrie answered, with a sudden exultation. The other alternative did not appear to have entered her mind.

"That's not what I mean. It's that we—I— Oh, how can I explain?"

She found it impossible to express in words the confusion and maidenly reserve that protested against so swift and unconditional a surrender. Springing to her feet, she turned to the big pine at the foot of which they had been sitting, rested her forehead against the rough bark, and pressed her hands upon her throbbing temples. She might have been a dryad asking counsel of her protecting tree.

Lorrie rose and stepped to her side. "You don't need to explain, dear," said he gently. "I quite understand."

He took both of her hands in his and turned her to face him. Wynne's head drooped. She was not frightened or afraid, but filled with an overwhelming confusion. Yet, oddly enough, Lorrie's grasp was rather com-

forting. It was strong, but she felt that she could easily draw her hands away if she so wished; also, that she had only to say the word and he would leave her in peace. But she did not want him to go. The thought of his turning to walk back up the stream and out of her life filled her with a pang of loneliness.

"Listen to me, Wynne," said Lorrie in his gentlest tones. "It's true that we have just met and scarcely know each other. But there must be some tremendous bond of sympathy or we never could have got this far in so short a time. Besides, we've got so much in common. We're both alone in the world, and neither of us is getting what we ought from life. Of course I might ask you to wait another year, but that would only mean a year of happiness lost. You say that you're not happy here, and I certainly have a pretty rotten time of it in Panama. It's just a steady grind, without a bright spot from one month's end to the other. I'm not one of these impulsive people that want one thing one day and another the next. Besides, I don't want to run the risk of losing you. If you'll marry me to-day, you may consider it merely as an engagement, if you like. You can be free as air—a lot freer than you are here in the sort of a home you've been telling me about. You can take your own time about learning to care for me. But if you would rather have me stay on another week, or even two, I'll do it. Or would you rather have me say no more and go?" He drew her closer. "I know it's terribly sudden, Wynne. Do you want me to go?"

Wynne looked up, and the rich color flooded her face. She shook her head. Lorrie, his blue eyes as dark as sapphires, loosed her hands and slipped his arm around her shoulders.

"You darling!" said he. "You're mine! Do you understand? You're mine!"

There was a ring of triumph in his voice. He drew her closer still, and as she looked up at him wildly, he crushed his lips to hers.

### CHAPTER III.

The Reverend James O'Connor, fishing so carefully and conscientiously in the wake of Lorrie as to make the shade of the "Compleat Angler" rejoice in heaven, was hot and happy and laden with his catch when, rounding the bend of the stream, he came upon a tableau that left him uncertain for a moment whether to advance or to retreat.

Being of Irish stock and, as such, incapable, mentally, morally, and physically, of retreat, the Reverend Jim proceeded to advance. But he gave warning of his approach by making noise enough to frighten all living things but lovers. This failing in its effect, he burst into song, first screening himself from view. The voice of the Reverend Jim had all of the dulcet sweetness of a steam calliope in a circus parade, and its high trajectory knocked the pine cones tumbling about the ears of Wynne and Lorrie and brought them back to some slight sense of their surroundings.

"That must be Jim," said Lorrie.

"Not your friend, the minister!" said Wynne, reaching for her hair.

"The same," Lorrie answered. "He likes to yowl that way when he thinks he's alone. Says it trains his voice for addressing big crowds at political assemblies. You see, Jim's a rank socialist at heart, though he'd get mad if you accused him of it. But he's probably done more to improve tenement-house conditions than any man in New York. He's the backbone of a lot of charities—homes for working women, and orphan asylums that are not so asylums, and all that sort of thing."

"Lorrie, oh, Lorrie!" roared the Rev-



erend Jim from behind a boulder 'not thirty feet away.

"No need to crack our eardrums, Jim," Lorrie answered.

The square bulk of the Reverend Jim, surmounted by a visage equally square, sunburned, and perspiring freely, hove in sight around the shoulder of the rock. He showed no surprise at the sight of Wynne.

"How d'ye do, Miss Stuart," said he, with that kindly, sympathetic smile which had brought such a host of men, women, and children flocking to his elbow for comfort, censure, or advice. "Introduce me, Lorrie," he added, with twinkling eyes that embraced them both and gave them benediction.

"I've done that already," Lorrie answered.

The Reverend Jim laughed jovially.

"Well, then," said he, "in that case I'll proceed to cool off a little, if you'll excuse me. What's up, Lorrie?" he asked, as he dipped his handkerchief into the water and sponged his face. "Called back?"

"Yes," Lorrie answered. "How did you know, Jim?"

"I just guessed," answered the Reverend Jim, continuing his ablutions. "That little postal-cable kid was squatting downstream like an otter hound, with a cable for you from Panama. On his way back, I asked him if he'd found you, and he said yes, that you were downstream about a mile, talking to Wynne Stuart. What's the trouble?"

"Got to start back to-night," Lorrie answered. "More slides in the Cut, and some of the gang getting cold feet. Not the first time. Let's try to forget about all that until we get back. Mop your head, Jim," he added, with a note of impatience. "It's nearly twelve o'clock, and we've got an awful lot of things to do, and we want you to help us."

"Indeed?"

The Reverend Jim's wise and ob-

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servant eyes examined the two glowing faces, Lorrie's slightly pale and eager and Wynne's shy and flushed, but both radiant with an emotion not difficult to fathom. It seemed to the Reverend Jim that here before him were two Olympians just descended from the high slopes of Hymettus. He was sorely puzzled and—a rare condition with him—distinctly embarrassed.

"Jim," said Lorrie, "if two people ever needed a guide, counselor, and friend to give a lot of swift and sage advice, Wynne and I are they. Sit down and let us tell you all about it."

So the big-souled clergyman unsling his brimming creel, laid down rod and landing net, and, seating himself opposite them in the shade, listened in silence while Lorrie, in his abrupt, staccato way, explained the wonderful thing that had come to pass. Wynne never once opened her lips, but sat in silence, with a high flush on her soft cheeks, and watched the Reverend Jim from under her long lashes. Nor did the clergyman interrupt, but listened in a growing amazement that was betrayed only in his quick glances from one to the other.

"So there you are, Jim," Lorry concluded. "Now what do you think?"

The Reverend Jim did not reply immediately. He took a very deep breath and exhaled it slowly, with a slight whistling sound.

"Well," said he finally, "of all the large advice that has ever been required of my limited intelligence on the spur of the moment, this that you demand has easily the thrilling record." He pursed up his lips and looked at Wynne. "Are you of age, my dear?"

"Yes," Wynne answered. "I came of age last year."

"H'm, h'm." The Reverend Jim appeared to be having difficulty in crystallizing his thoughts. But long and faithful service in the succor of all

types of perplexed humanity had made him adept at this, and after a minute's reflection and another swift scrutiny of the lovely, troubled face, he began, slowly and carefully, to speak.

"There's no question but that Lorrie should return at once to Panama," said he. "When his chief granted him his vacation, it was with the understanding that he should hold himself in readiness to return at a moment's notice, if so required." He looked at Lorrie, who nodded.

"That eliminates the possibility of his stopping on here in order that you two might get to know each other to some extent before venturing to marry. Lorrie must keep his word. He owes it to himself, to his responsible position, and to the importance of his work. As a matter of fact, the delay would probably be of advantage only in making it easier for Wynne's feelings in taking the step and in observing the usual conventions. We all of us have our intuitions, and as I observe you two, it seems to me impossible to imagine two young people who impress one as better suited to make each other happy. Of course I don't know Wynne, but it's impossible not to be conscious of the pure, sweet soul that shines through her eyes."

Wynne's color heightened, and she looked down, breathing rapidly.

"Lorrie I know well," continued the Reverend Jim, "and I believe him to be the stuff from which faithful and devoted husbands are made. In the case of properly balanced men and women who are not governed by mere emotions or mawkish sentiment, I am a firm believer in what is called 'love at first sight,' because I think that this emanates rather from the spirit than from the flesh. But, even admitting this, the covenant of holy matrimony is not one to be undertaken in haste and without due deliberation, so that in my opinion it would be far better

to wait until Lorrie has finished his work upon the Zone, or found the means to resign his position and return to pursue his suit in the customary conventional manner."

He stopped and looked kindly at the pair. Lorrie's face, bright and expectant until these last few words, had fallen, while the rich color seemed to fade from Wynne's.

Lorrie's consternation was only of an instant's duration.

"But see here, Jim," he cried, "what's the good of that? Once back there, Heaven only knows when I may be able to jar loose, and as for Wynne, why, she's practically homeless! It's been hard enough for her since her mother died, three years ago, but now that her beast of a stepfather is about to marry a common woman that she despises, it's just impossible, that's all."

The Reverend Jim looked at Wynne.

"What do you think, yourself, my dear?" he asked.

Wynne looked sorely distressed.

"I don't know what to think, Mr. O'Connor," said she. "At first it seemed quite out of the question—scarcely—decent, in fact. But, as Lorrie says, it's not our fault, and—and since it's got to be a choice between right away or waiting indefinitely—and—and if Lorrie is very, very sure that he won't be sorry afterward—because you've no idea how horrid it is here"—she began to grow rather incoherent—"and if I were sure that—that he'd be kind to me——"

"No need to bother your head about that, dear," Lorrie interrupted, and slipped his arm around her, then looked defiantly at his friend.

"Truth of the matter is, Jim," said he, "our minds are made up. I've persuaded Wynne that it's the only thing to do, even if it is sort of sudden. Her stepfather won't make any kick. He'll be glad to get rid of her. But we've got mighty little time if we want to

catch the train for Halifax and take to-night's express for New York. That'll give us one day before we sail, and Wynne has got to get some clothes and things. So we want you to marry us as quickly as you can."

"But that is impossible, my boy," said the Reverend Jim. "This is a British colony." He knit his brows, and reflected for a moment, then looked up with a wry smile. "What was the use of wasting time in asking my advice if your minds are already made up? Are they?"

"Sure thing," Lorrie answered. "I thought you'd be for us or I wouldn't have asked," he added naively, "especially as you've been advising me to get married. But what the dickens are we to do, because I tell you flat I'm not going off without Wynne, canal or no canal. I'd rather see the whole blooming ditch fill up in a single night."

"Well," replied the Reverend Jim, "since you're both determined, the only thing that I can suggest is this: I'll chaperon you to New York and marry you at noon on Friday. Your ship sails Saturday at eight a. m. I know, because I once went down to see Donny off for Jamaica and Miraflores. That'll give Wynne time to get a few things and incidentally, on the trip down, to adjust her mind a little more to this sudden plunge into the sea of matrimony."

Lorrie sprang up and seized him by the hand.

"That's the stuff, Jim!" he cried radiantly. He did not stop to consider the fact that his good friend, tired and worn out from long months of tenement work, was curtailing his vacation by a week, or that his kind offices might not meet with approval in high ecclesiastical circles, should any see fit to criticize them. This latter possibility did indeed occur to the balanced mind of the Reverend Jim, but he dismissed it with a mental shrug.

"Well," said he, rising and glancing at his wrist watch, "we've no time to spare. You'd better go home with Wynne and explain the situation as best you can to her guardian or stepfather, and I'll hurry back to the hotel and get our things packed and call for you with a hack. It would be better to have him see that she is to make the journey in the care of a clergyman."

"All right, Jim," said Lorrie, joyfully springing to his feet. "Come on, Wynne. Let's go and get it over with."

There was no stopping Lorrie, once started, and his masterfulness thrilled Wynne and swept away her lingering doubts. The truth of the matter was that Wynne had fallen in love with him at first sight, just as he had with her, and under such circumstances things move quickly. She did not wish to be the cause of interfering with his work, and she felt that she was as ready to place her fate in his safeguarding then and there as she would be in a week's time. As for Lorrie, he was not the man to sit under a bough from which hung a luscious peach, ripened to perfection, and wait for the fruit to drop into his lap. He wanted Wynne and he wanted her at once, so he merely plucked her without more ado. And Wynne liked him the better for this precipitation. She was ripe for love, and sick and tired of the branch, and the thought that by that time to-morrow she would be far from Angus Clegg and his sneering sarcasms, outward bound for the great world of which she so constantly dreamed, brought a rush of joyful and breathless emotion. It seemed too good to be true, and she registered a little vow that it would not be her fault if Lorrie should ever come to regret the rashness of his step.

Walking back to Wynne's home, their talk was less loverlike than practical, though beneath it there lurked always

a breathless undercurrent of racing emotions. On Wynne's part, these were shot with vivid colors, now soft, now blindingly brilliant and infused with the intoxicating sense of great adventure, as if she were in an airship driving through vast altitudes toward some new and wonderful planet, directed by a pilot whose hand was sure and strong. With Lorrie, the protective instinct was uppermost, and a tenderness that served rather to moderate than to excite passion. Several times he stopped to kiss her, and Wynne gave herself happily to his embrace.

Angus Clegg had not come in when they arrived at the farm, and Wynne hurried away to pack and change, rather hoping that they might get off before his return. She had never been afraid of Clegg, as he very well knew, but she hated his harsh, sneering manner and felt pretty sure that he would strongly oppose her step, through fear that people might say it was due to his treatment of her.

Therefore, with the aid of an elderly crone who was scrubbing the kitchen, she hurriedly dragged down from the attic an ancient leather trunk that had belonged to her father, cleaned it, and packed it with her few belongings, then changed into her best suit—a light-gray tweed of a Norfolk style and quite new and nicely cut. Avaricious though he was, Clegg did not stint Wynne in the matter of her simple wardrobe. For appearance's sake, he preferred to have her dress according to her station.

Meanwhile, Lorrie sat on the stoop and waited patiently, his mind dwelling upon the delightfulness of Wynne, with occasional thrills of excitement. He was thus mentally occupied when a highly varnished buggy, drawn by a strong, lean horse, drew up before the gate, and there descended a man of large frame and high, forbidding features.

"That must be Clegg," thought Lorrie, rising to his feet.

At the same time, he heard some heavy object being bumped down the stairs. Lorrie did not like the look of Clegg. His face suggested all that Wynne had described as to saturnine unpleasantness, but the big, gristly, bristly wrists and powerful, bony shoulders did not seem to match with the vulpine, furtive expression and the small, shifty eyes which might have merged but for the thin-bridged nose, so closely were they set together.

"I wish ye good day, sir-r," said Clegg, as he strode up the gravel path.

"Good morning," Lorrie answered.

Clegg paused. His squinting eyes had assayed Lorrie as a possible client who might wish to buy a building site or to lease fishing privileges or something of the sort.

"Ye are waiting to see me, perhaps," said he. "I am Mr. Clegg."

"So I imagined," Lorrie answered. He was not conscious of any awkwardness or embarrassment, partly because he was accustomed to deal with rough types of men and also because his nature was rather combative. "I'd like a few words with you, if you don't mind, Mr. Clegg."

"I am at your service, sir-r," Clegg answered, with another keen glance at the handsome, thoroughbred face and well-knit figure. "Will ye kindly step inside?"

Lorrie entered the house, followed by Clegg, and there they came upon Wynne, dressed for travel and standing rather flushed and breathless beside her trunk. Clegg raised his eyebrows.

"Now what is all this?" he demanded harshly.

"If you will give me a few minutes of your time, Mr. Clegg," said Lorrie, "I will explain the situation."

Clegg stared at him for an instant, then motioned to the parlor. They entered, Wynne remaining outside, and

Lorrie took the proffered chair. Clegg remained standing, with his big shoulders against the mantel of the wide fireplace.

Lorrie lost no time in coming to the point.

"Miss Stuart and I are going to be married," said he. "We had hoped to be married here in the usual way, but circumstances have arisen which make this impossible. I am an engineer and have been employed for the last five years on the Panama Canal. Being given a few weeks' vacation, I came up here with an old friend, the Reverend James O'Connor, of New York, for a fortnight's fishing. Miss Stuart and I met on the trout stream and became acquainted. She has now consented to be my wife, but to-day—only a couple of hours ago—I got a cable from my chief in Panama, instructing me to return by Saturday's Royal Mail steamer from New York. As there seems no other way of arranging it, the Reverend Mr. O'Connor, who ought to be here presently, has agreed to escort Miss Stuart to New York and will marry us there on our arrival. We sail the following day for Panama."

Clegg's close-set eyes appeared positively to merge. He stared down at Lorrie for a moment without answering. The information that he had just received in this abrupt manner was not only a shock, but a decidedly unpleasant shock. Clegg had his own excellent reasons for not wishing his stepdaughter to marry out of the immediate vicinity. There had been certain manipulations of his own in the transference of his late wife's property to himself which he felt it far better not to have subjected to close scrutiny at present, and he was afraid that if she were to wed some alien, there might be an investigation. On the contrary, there were few persons in his own locality who would care to risk the enmity of Angus Clegg, a rich man with

his bony fist in almost every financial pie in and about the place. He was a holder of mortgages, a merchant banker, an extensive landlord, produce buyer, shipper, and general promoter. He had hoped that Wynne would not marry for some years, and then some local swain, who would not dare question the amount of the marriage portion he might see fit to give her out of his bounty.

Now he was sadly taken aback. As a shrewd judge of men, he was quick to realize that this short-spoken stranger was a person to be reckoned with. He also knew that there was no hope of his being able to coerce Wynne herself. She was of legal age, and he had no authority to detain her against her will.

As he squinted down at Lorrie with his small, foxy eyes, Clegg's anger rose. But he was a cautious man, and his experience had taught him that it was better not to try to bully until other methods failed. So he mustered a sardonic smile and answered politely enough:

"'Tis a bit of a shock, this y'are telling me, Mr. Stirling. I wonder my stepdaughter should have left me in the dark."

"She did not consent to marry me until I got my cable, about two hours ago," Lorrie answered. "We were fishing on the stream when the boy brought it. I'm sorry to have to be so abrupt, but there doesn't seem to be any help for it. Once back on the Zone, I may not be able to get off for another year."

Clegg eyed him narrowly.

"I presume y'are aware that Wynne has no *dot*, as the French say?"

"So she told me," Lorrie answered, his dislike for the man increasing. "That need not matter. My salary is enough to support her decently, and outside of that I have a separate income of about two thousand five hun-

dred dollars a year. Then I've put aside several thousand dollars."

Clegg's face lightened a little.

"I see y'are a gentleman of means," said he. "But of course y'are a stranger to me, and before giving my consent to this marriage, I should like to have some assurance, y'understand, as to your personal character and the like of that. Not that I have any doubts, sir-r, but this thing of marrying is a serious business, as ye must admit yourself."

"I'm sorry," said Lorrie stiffly, for he found Clegg's propitiatory manner more distasteful than his opposition would have been, "but there's scarcely time for any references, except from my friend, the Reverend Mr. O'Connor, who ought to be here any minute. Mr. O'Connor is one of the most prominent clergymen in New York, and very widely known and respected. You see, Mr. Clegg, we've got to catch the train for Halifax, to connect with the express, in order to get married and take our ship for the Isthmus."

Clegg rubbed his bony hands together slowly, but his cunning brain was working rapidly enough. The situation struck him as not so bad. Here was apparently a fool to whom money had slight value and who did not impress him as apt to make trouble. But he wanted to be sure; so, infusing his harsh voice with what was intended to be a pleasant tone, he said suavely:

"I see from your words that it is Wynne herself ye want and no thought of a dowry. But of course I should not think of letting my stepdaughter go to you in her shift. As a matter of fact, she has nothing, as I will explain that ye may understand. When her mother and I were married, the estate was in a sad condition and would not have brought a thousand pounds, what with the mortgages, and the buildings tumbling apart, and the pastures marshy and undrained, and the like of

that. Seeing all going to ruin, my late lamented wife transferred the property to me, with all due legal formality, when I sunk my own savings of some ten thousand pounds in the effort to save and redeem it, which, having some business ability and more than the ordinary capacity—if I do say it myself—for hard work and thriftiness, I have managed to accomplish. Had I not succeeded, all would have been lost, my own fortune as well."

"You are to be congratulated," said Lorrie, stifling his impatience and glancing at his watch.

Clegg observed him with inward exultation. He felt that if he could only manage to prolong the interview sufficiently, his object would be accomplished. So he resumed, speaking with as drawing a deliberation as he dared:

"Now, ye must understand, Mr. Stirling, that Wynne is not legally entitled to a penny, as ye may satisfy yourself if you care to consult a lawyer. But far be it from me to let my poor wife's only daughter go to her husband with nothing but the frock upon her back."

And he maundered along, while Lorrie squirmed inwardly and began to wonder nervously if the Reverend Jim had been unable to find a conveyance. Then, just as he was getting desperate with the fear of losing his train, there was the sound of hoofs and the rattle of a vehicle outside, and, looking through the window, he saw a ramshackle surrey drawn by a bony, rat-tailed pair of horses. On the back seat, red-faced and perspiring, with a heap of luggage piled around him, sat the Reverend Jim.

"There's my friend, now," said Lorrie, springing up. "Well, Mr. Clegg, I'll have to ask you to finish what you are about to say as quickly as possible, because we've mighty little time."

"'Twill take but a minute," said Clegg, and as he spoke, the Reverend



Jim rapped sharply on the door, and they heard his voice and Wynne's.

"Come in, Jim," called Lorrie, "and you, too, Wynne. Tell the driver to stick Wynne's trunk in the wagon."

The Reverend Jim obeyed and entered, followed rather shyly by Wynne. Lorrie performed a hurried introduction.

"Mr. Clegg has been explaining Wynne's circumstances," said Lorrie, "although I told him that they had no bearing on the case. It appears that he took over the estate when it was all gone to pot and by investing fifty thousand dollars of his own, has got it on a profitable basis. It appears that Wynne is not legally entitled to a cent, but Mr. Clegg wants to do something for her, though he has not yet said what."

Clegg nodded.

"Since y'are pressed for time, gentlemen," said he, speaking quickly enough now, "though, as Mr. Stirling says, my stepdaughter has no legal claim whatever, I feel that she is morally entitled to a share in my own profits during the last few years of my management of the property. I am, therefore, prepared to offer Wynne my check for two thousand pounds—ten thousand dollars, which is more than twice the value of the estate when I took hold of it. But to avoid all misunderstandings in the future, in case of heirs and the like, I must ask her to sign a release from any future claim. 'Twill take but a few strokes o' the pen and a minute at the notary's, which is on your way to the station."

Wynne's eyes opened very wide.

"That is nice of you, Angus," said she.

Even Lorrie looked surprised.

"Well, then," said he, "let's be quick about it."

But the Reverend Jim shook his head. It was not for nothing that he had managed charitable behests and big endow-

ments for homes and shelters and asylums.

"No," said he curtly, for his experienced eyes, trained in the appraising of human greed, had pierced Clegg's horny shell to the shifty soul beneath. "Wynne shall sign nothing. If Mr. Clegg wishes to make her a wedding present, I'm sure she'll appreciate it deeply. But I fail to see why she should be required to sign a release."

Clegg's face assumed a disagreeable hue.

"'Tis a mere formality to save the possible useless trouble and expense of any future litigation," said he.

"That shouldn't be likely, according to what you tell us," answered the Reverend Jim.

"Sir-r," snarled Clegg, "are you aiming to question my good faith?"

"Of course not!" snapped the Reverend Jim. "Wynne is not to sign. That's all."

"Then she shall not touch a penny!" cried Clegg harshly.

"Very well, if you feel that way about it. We really haven't time to discuss the matter now. Good day, Mr. Clegg. Come on, Wynne. Come, Lorrie."

He turned to the door, but Clegg strode past him and barred the threshold. His forbidding face looked positively dangerous.

"I forbid ye to take my stepdaughter from this house!" he snarled. "What sort of a business is this? Do you, who claim to be a minister o' the gospel, dare to entice a young, unmarried girl from her home? Y'are not known to me, neither the one nor the other. For all I can tell, ye may be dishonest folk. I am acting in my rights, and the law will uphold me. Take care! I am a quiet body, but if ye try to abduct the girl, I will not be stopping at preventing it by force!"

Lorrie made an impulsive movement, but the Reverend Jim thrust him back

with his thick, powerful arm and confronted the furious Clegg. The high color had left his face, but his gray-green eyes were like ice.

"Mr. Clegg," said he quietly, "you know quite as well as I do that you have no right whatever, either legal or moral, to try to detain Miss Stuart. We have no time to waste in quarreling, but unless you step aside at once and let us pass, I shall first plant my fist on your jaw and then bring suit against you in Miss Wynne's interest, for illegal and forcible detention."

Clegg hesitated but for an instant. Though topping the Reverend Jim by almost a head, there was something that promised him ill in the square, thickset figure and bull-like neck and arms. And one glance into the narrowed eyes told him that this promise would be quickly fulfilled. He stepped aside.

"Go, then!" he snarled, scarcely able to speak. "Out of my house, the lot of ye! But let me warn ye, Mr. Wolf-in-sheep's-clothing, ye shall live to rue this day!"

#### CHAPTER IV.

Marriage comes usually to a girl in such a whirl of events that she has scarcely time to realize the significance of it all before she suddenly discovers that all the ceremony and shouting is over with and that she is quite alone with the male person destined to make her future life a terrestrial heaven or hell.

This happened to Wynne, thanks to the Reverend Jim. Turning the situation over in his mind after leaving the pair, he determined that Wynne's marriage should be no flyaway match, but an actual event. Wynne had taken a very strong grip on his big, warm heart, and, even though time pressed, he wanted her to have a bright and animated wedding upon which she might look back in later years with happiness. So, without consulting Lorrie on

the matter, he went to the telegraph office and sent off several wires, of which the most important was to a member of Lorrie's college fraternity who was socially prominent and an active alumnus in all that pertained to the preservation of the friendship formed at Yale:

Lorrie Stirling to be married Friday at four. Little Church Around the Corner. Sailing next morning for Panama. Collect the clan and their ladies. Order flowers. Want all *comme il faut*. REV. JIM.

And it responded loyally, the clan. On arriving at their hotel in New York, the Reverend Jim somewhat sheepishly informed Wynne and Lorrie what he had done.

"Wynne's got to have a snappy little wedding," said he. "It's too important an event to treat casually. Quite a lot of people will be there at the church. What are you going to wear, Wynne?"

"But I haven't anything, Jim!" cried Wynne in dismay. "Oh, I wish you hadn't done it!" and she looked as if she wanted to laugh and to cry at the same time. "I've got a white muslin gown trimmed with old Irish lace, which my mother wore when she was married—not the gown, but the lace. The gown is pretty, but not at all stylish. It's terribly old-fashioned. And I haven't any hat."

"Come with me," said the Reverend Jim. "There's a stylish modiste two steps from the door of the hotel. That hat is going to be my wedding present to you, Wynne. Come along and let's get it. We've got no time to spare. How about you, Lorrie?"

"Hang it all, Jim," said Lorrie, "I've got nothing but what you've seen. What the deuce did you want to make us all this trouble for?"

"You'll understand it some day, my little boy," said the Reverend Jim. "Wait. Wynne and I are going out to buy a hat, and while we are gone,

you'd better spin over to one of those big shops where they have ready-made clothes and buy yourself a nice black serge suit to get married in. Scoot, Lorrie! We haven't any time to spare."

So Lorrie scooted and, being of normal proportions, had no difficulty in getting his wants supplied. Meanwhile, the Reverend Jim took Wynne around the corner to one of the most fashionable and, incidentally, one of the most expensive millinery shops in New York, where they selected a drooping leghorn hat with a single big white fluffy ostrich plume, under which her face looked out a dream of beauty. Even the saleswomen, accustomed as they were to adorning the fairest in the land, were genuinely impressed. As for Wynne, who had never had any but the simplest costumes, she could scarcely believe that the mirror told the truth, but seemed inclined to think that it was a trick one, designed to sell the wares of the establishment.

"You're a perfect dear, Jim!" she cried joyously, as they went out of the shop and headed for another, to buy some gloves and white suede shoes and silk stockings. "Thank you so awfully, awfully much! If we weren't in the street, I'd kiss you, but I shall as soon as we get back to the hotel."

They hurried through their shopping, for time pressed, then back to the hotel, where they found Lorrie waiting, hot and impatient, very.

"Now, then," said the Reverend Jim, "let's talk business for a minute, and then I'll be off. I want to run across to the church and see that everything's in order. You got the ring, Lorrie?"

"First thing I did," Lorrie answered, handing a small box to the Reverend Jim.

"May I see it?" Wynne asked, and without waiting for permission, opened the little case and examined the ring with misty eyes.

But the Reverend Jim was disap-

pointed, though he managed to hide his vexation. He had not suggested to Lorrie the idea of an engagement ring because he had trusted that Lorrie would think of it himself. However, Lorrie had failed to do so. As a matter of fact, it had never entered his mind. Nor did Wynne seem conscious of any delinquency, so the Reverend Jim held his peace.

Then the telephone began to ring, and the Reverend Jim answered it.

"Herbert," said he, glancing at Lorrie and then at Wynne. "Herbert's to be Lorrie's best man, you know. Doctor Penfold is going to give you away. I had a talk— Hello! Hello, Yarbs! What? Yes—all going strong. Yes— Lorrie's doing nicely. What? Just got in from Greenwich? Ellen's with you? What? Donny? You don't say so! Bring him with you, of course. I thought he was in Cuba. Yes, all right. We'll see Donny at the church, then, for a minute or two. Good! So long." And the Reverend Jim hung the receiver on its hook and proceeded to swab his perspiring visage. "Yarbs is coming down to look after you," said he to Lorrie, "and Ellen is going to take Wynne in charge. I've got to scoot."

"What was that about Donny?" Lorrie asked.

He and Don Edmundo Lope de Vega Cervantes de Garcia, that rich lord of the southern coast of Cuba who dated his ancestry some generations before the Cid, had been roommates at Yale during their junior and senior years and, while never having become particularly intimate, held each other in much mutual esteem. Lorrie had liked and admired the high-bred Cuban's modest and unaffected nature, which was quite unspoiled by his vast wealth, and "Donny," who had been rather gay until he had come to undertake the management of his great estate, had found Lorrie a most congenial and profitable counterweight. Lorrie had coached his

roommate with such good results that Donny, instead of merely scraping through, had graduated with a good standing. In return, he had helped Lorrie to perfect the Spanish which the latter had taken as an elective course, knowing that, as an engineer, it would prove of great value to him.

"Donny will try to get to the church," said the Reverend Jim, "but he can't promise, because he has an appointment with some agricultural expert from the Smithsonian who is sailing for Europe. Now I must go. Yarbs will be here in a few minutes to take you in charge, and Ellen will look after Wynne."

## CHAPTER V.

Marriage came to Wynne as a bewildering, intoxicating state of bliss that made her seem a stranger to herself. She could scarcely realize that she was the same person, which, as a matter of fact, she was not. She felt no more vain regrets for that departed Wynne than a lovely moth, opening its wings for the first time in the sunshine, would regret its chrysalis. Comparing the rapture of this new existence with the dullness of the previous one, Wynne felt as if she had burst joyously from a cocoon.

As for Lorrie, he was probably even more amazed than Wynne at the new life opening out ahead of him. He knew practically nothing about women, as he had never had time to interest himself in them; his whole thought had been absorbed in his work. Yet now it seemed to him the most natural thing in the world that he should possess Wynne, and he was secretly amazed that it should be so. And what seemed to him even more astonishing was Wynne's sweet and loving surrender of herself and the joyful assurance she seemed to feel in the sincerity of his devotion to her. This touched Lorrie

to the very depths of a nature that was strong enough and very honest, but as yet undeveloped in many ways. Wynne, in this respect, was far older than he.

The voyage down was a dream of delight. The weather was sweet and mild, and the sea a vast, gently breathing lake. The chief himself met them on their arrival at Cofon and took them out to Culebra. Wynne was delighted with their little bungalow, which overlooked the great cut and its ceaseless activity. Lorrie's coworkers and the wives of such few as were married gave them a hearty reception, and Wynne liked them all and appreciated their kindness.

But it was not many days before she discovered a dangerous rival, and that was Lorrie's work. Once fairly established, a subtle change came over Lorrie. He was kind and thoughtful of her comfort, but there were periods when he seemed almost to forget her existence. He left her early in the morning with a perfunctory kiss, and returned late and too tired for more than the briefest exchange of ideas, sometimes falling asleep at the supper table. Wynne, who had thought of him as a person of high official importance, which indeed he was, rebelled against such drudgery. Had Lorrie gone forth booted and spurred and with some sort of ceremony, it would not have been so bad, but to see him sludging off in the steaming rain like any day laborer suggested uncomfortable doubts as to his actual importance.

For Wynne had arrived at the worst season on the Isthmus and, northern bred as she was, the climate soon began to affect her disagreeably. The change from the strong, bracing air of Nova Scotia to this stew pan, with its simmering miasmas, was trying in the extreme. She could have slept comfortably in the snow, but the sodden reek of the Isthmus soon began to get in its insidious weakening effect not

only on her vigorous young body, but also to some extent upon her mind. Her high color was bleached by the steaming atmosphere and her strong muscles felt lax and fatigued. She did not lose in flesh, but her tissues lost their solid firmness and one day she noticed that her slender ankles were beginning to thicken. Sometimes, while dozing in her hammock, it seemed to her that her mind was thickening, too. The languid society of such acquaintances as she had made became more of a nuisance than a pleasure and, barring one or two neighbors, she soon ceased to make any social effort. The women confided in her that they regarded their term of service on the Zone as so many months of prison, only to be supported by the prospect of occasional vacations and the keen eagerness of their husbands, who loved their work even more than the wives hated it.

They were fine men, these toilers, as Wynne was bound to admit, and as she got better acquainted with them, Lorrie, that paragon of conscientious industry, began to seem to her less extraordinary. After all, he was merely one of the thousands who had become imbued with a sort of monomania—to get the "big ditch" dug and see a tall ship treading its way between Gold and Contractors' Hills. He grew to remind her of a working bee, in which the instinct for labor has supplanted that of sex. Sometimes Wynne doubted that he thought of her at all except when close propinquity aroused a sort of hectic demonstration of affection.

Six months passed in this way, and Lorrie, determined to do his full share in the great undertaking, seemed not to realize how deadly dull life was for Wynne. She grew pale, listless, and slept continually, but without refreshment. Her uncommon beauty showed no signs of fading, but it underwent a subtle change, becoming diaphanous

and exotic where formerly it had been instinct with exuberant vitality. At times, too, her nerves required all of her control, and it was only her resolute determination not to play the cry baby that enabled her to keep from a storm of tears or a burst of fierce resentment.

Then a very tired doctor, who was a friend of Lorrie's and a devoted admirer of Wynne's, called Lorrie's attention to her state of health.

"Your wife is rather anæmic," he said.

"She'll feel better when the season changes," Lorrie answered, scraping the mold from his boots. "It's not bad after the rainy season, and next summer we'll take a trip North."

A fortnight later, the doctor spoke to Lorrie again, this time with more vehemence.

"I've just seen your wife," said he. "Get her out of here, and quick."

Lorrie looked at him, rather startled. "What's the matter?" he asked.

"Nothing organic, but if she sticks on here much longer, she'll break down. It's not only the climate, but a combination of homesickness, utter boredom, and bad hygiene. She won't take any exercise, and some of these fool women have taught her to smoke and drink cocktails. She's always been used to tennis and golf and trout fishing, and now she spends most of her time in her hammock with a novel and a cigarette. There's a certain lazy type of woman who gets along well enough on that sore of régime, but your wife's not that sort."

Lorrie looked distressed.

"What ought I do?" he asked.

"A lot," answered the doctor. "She ought to have a change as soon as possible, but in the meantime, you can help her condition if you try. You've been neglecting her for your work, Stirling. There are some women who can stand toil or hardship or even downright

abuse, but go all to pieces when neglected, and Mrs. Stirling is one of that kind. She's unhappy and discouraged and feels that you are losing interest in her."

"Did she tell you so?" Lorrie asked.

"Of course not," said the doctor sharply. "She's not that sort. She doesn't need to, though. I know the symptoms just as you know when your damned Chagres River is getting restive. Your wife isn't common clay. She's not even indurated clay, like this accursed stuff that's forever slipping down into the cut. She's a rich, fertile garden which, unless properly tended, gets choked with weeds. Now you take my advice and do a little less work for the I. C. C. and more in your own garden. You'll never get any thanks from the I. C. C." He turned on his heel, for they were standing on the edge of the terrace in front of Lorrie's bungalow. "Look after your garden, Stirling. Don't let the jungle creep in to claim it."

And this hard-worked doctor—who was a bit of a poet at heart, as all good doctors ought to be—gave Lorrie a brief, but friendly, nod and swung himself astride his sweating pony.

When Lorrie returned, a little later, to the bungalow, he found Wynne sitting bolt upright in her hammock with an open letter on her knee. At first sight of the high flush on her cheeks and the brilliancy of her eyes, Lorrie was shot suddenly with dire misgivings, for he was quite too well acquainted with fever symptoms.

"What's the matter, Wynne?" he asked gently.

"Read that," Wynne answered, handing him the letter. "It's from Jim. And there's one here for you from Don Edmundo de Garcia. Oh, Lorrie, don't you think you could manage to get leave for a month? It would do us both such an awful lot of good. You especially, dear. You're all tired out,

You said the other day that the worst of it was over now."

Lorrie took the letter, which read:

DEAR WYNNE: Don Edmundo de Garcia, who roomed with Donny at Yale, has rounded up a lot of us and brought us down to this wonderful place of his on his big auxiliary yacht, *Sea Flower*. There's quite a party of us, and Donny insists on our living here the rest of our lives, but it would make no difference if there were fifty, so far as the hospitality and accommodations are concerned.

As we are all interested to see the "big ditch" before they let the water in, Donny is going to ferry us over to the Isthmus in his yacht, and we shall requisition Lorrie to show us over the works for a day or two. Our host then intends, with the assistance of all hands of us, to kidnap you and Lorrie and bring you back to Miraflores, to remain as long as you can possibly manage it. I'm not sending you any pictures of the place, as I want you to see it first in all its magnificence.

Most of the party are old friends of Lorrie's, and several of them assisted at your wedding. Donny is writing to Lorrie, and won't take "no" for an answer. You are both entitled to a vacation, and nobody should spend more than six months so near the equator without a change. We shall probably arrive at Colon not more than a week or ten days after this reaches you, so make your plans accordingly. With love to you both, Jim.

Lorrie laid down the letter and gave a long, low whistle, then reached for the other, which Wynne handed him and which he read aloud:

"DEAR OLD LORRIE: While North on a short business trip, I was fortunate in being able to collect a handful of dear people—most of whom are mutual friends—hale them aboard the *Sea Flower*, and transport them here to cheer my solitude for as long as I can make their captivity supportable. There are Lord and Lady Charteris—she was Edna Gillespie, you know—Lady Audrey—Charteris' elder sister and a trump—the Calvert Laniers, Mrs. Doremus and her daughter Aileen—the only ones whom you don't know—Cécile Bell, the Harold Applebos—they sailed down in their own boat, *Eglantine*—and the Reverend Jim, whom I dragged bawling from his slums by the scant hair of his head, he being very



tired and stale from a summer sojourn in his tenements.

"The whole noisy pack of us are now planning a raid on the Isthmus, to abduct you and Wynne and fetch you back here to make our contentment complete. I warn you that if you make any resistance, through a mistaken sense of duty to your dams and spillways and locks and things, you'll be first damned by all hands, then spilled aboard the boat, and then locked up. Besides, your first duty is to your wife, and six months of Turkish bath is quite enough for a Northern bride. Incidentally, we should like to have a look at the canal, if you can spare a day or two in personally conducting us. If it can be managed, I wish you'd charter me a locomotive and an observation car, my time being limited, as I am very busy here in the construction of a new reservoir.

"I was awfully cut up at not being able to get to your wedding, but I couldn't possibly manage it, as a man whom it was imperative for me to see was sailing for Europe the next morning, and we had a great deal to go over at the eleventh hour.

"Expect us the morning of the 12th. That gives you ten days in which to prepare for the invasion.

"Best love to you both. DONNY."

"Jiminy!" sighed Lorrie. "Here's a bunch of trouble!"

Wynne was watching him tensely.

"Oh, but you can manage it, can't you, Lorrie?" she asked. "You say the work is going to be much lighter from now on. And we both do so need a change."

"There's no question about your needing it," Lorrie answered, "and I mean that you shall have it."

"I won't go without you," said Wynne wearily.

"Well, I'll talk to the chief and see what can be done. My vacation was cut short by three weeks last summer. At any rate, there's no doubt of my being able to get off long enough to go with you to Donny's place, and if I have to come back, you can stay on. Donny would never invite anybody for less than a month, but he might make an exception in my case."

Wynne's white face showed an animation it had not held for many weeks.

"Is it as wonderful as Jim says?" she asked.

"I guess Miraflores must be pretty grand, from all I've heard," Lorrie answered, rather indifferently. "It's about the oldest plantation in Cuba and takes in three or four big haciendas and several fishing villages along the south coast. Well, Wynne, we'll have to go to Panama and order us some glad rags if we're going to flock with this high-life bunch."

Wynne knitted her broad forehead.

"I wish you wouldn't speak like that, Lorrie," she said. "It sounds as if you considered us low life, and we're not. I'm sure my blood is quite as good as theirs, and so is yours. But you're right in saying that we must have something to wear." And her face brightened.

Once roused from her lethargy, Wynne became quite a different person. She had a vivacious little friend and neighbor, the wife of an officer in the I. C. C. police, who, though frankly envious of Wynne's good luck in having such a prospect for a thoroughly good time, lent herself with enthusiasm to the work of preparation. She carried Wynne off to Panama, where they took rooms at the Tivoli and entrenched themselves for a week's campaign of shopping. Panama does not lack of skilled *couterières* and the influence of the Spanish on styles imported from Paris proved perfect for Wynne's type of beauty, especially now, when her complexion suggested sunlight shining through a bleached sea shell, while her long gray eyes, with their wide pupils, looked through the shadows cast by their black lashes with a sort of inquiring and wistful melancholy.

Her favorite was a pale, sea-green evening gown. It was cut too low for so full-bosomed a woman as Wynne, and she objected to it, but her mischievous friend prevailed upon her to

accept it as it was. Lorrie, entering their room at the Tivoli to change for dinner, came on Wynne in this creation, with her heavy dark hair bound by two strips of crimson velvet and her feet in high-heeled satin slippers with buckles of brilliants. It knocked the breath clean out of him, but when he had recovered a little from the shock, he made the mistake of finding fault with the décolleté before he had expressed his admiration of the *tout ensemble*. Also, he objected to Wynne's application of a little rouge, a trick she had learned since the Isthmus had robbed her of her vivid coloring and the effect of which, against her transparent skin, gave her the look of a scarlet-rimmed orchid.

That week at the Tivoli was a good thing for Wynne. She could not but be aware of the intense admiration she aroused and, instead of exciting vanity, it merely gave her self-confidence and poise. Also, it swept away her mental lethargy and summoned back her natural vivacity and *joie de vivre*. Yet, in spite of all this, it must be admitted that she was conscious of certain little nervous flutters when she thought of the arrival of the *Sea Flower* and her party.

#### CHAPTER VI.

Then, one bright, breathless morning, after they had returned to the bungalow, Lorrie received a wireless, transmitted by telephone, saying that the *Sea Flower* was due to arrive in Colon at two p. m. So they took the train, Wynne in a great flutter of expectation, and when the long white graceful vessel approached, they boarded the launch of the port authorities and went out to meet her. They were recognized from afar by the gay party on the quarter-deck, and exchanged greetings as the yacht glided to the berth assigned her and the doctor made his brief inquiries.

In those few minutes, Wynne was seized with a sudden shyness. She had never known any people who belonged to this gay, fashionable world. The natives of her own locality were simple folk, and Wynne, having no social sponsor, had observed the summer visitors only from a distance. Her head was in a whirl when she found herself on the quarter-deck being embraced by the Reverend Jim, while Lorrie was in the grip of a tall and strikingly handsome man whom he promptly spun around to present to Wynne. She found herself looking into a high-bred face with clean-cut features, set with a pair of eyes so light in color as to be almost startling—neither blue nor green and as clear and hard as jade. She observed also that his hair was of a curious quality and color. It suggested sulphur smoke, so fine it was in texture; though thick and wavy, it seemed almost impalpable. His brows and lashes were dark, and so was his closely trimmed, wax-ended mustache. His head was rather narrow and high, with small, close-set ears, the jaw firm, though rather pointed, and the forehead broad and intelligent. It needed but a glance to comprehend the race of the man and its generations of dominant rule. His figure was strong and graceful, rather lean, and there was something sinuous about his movements and gestures.

"Wynne," said Lorrie, "let me present Don Edmundo Lope de Vega Cervantes de Garcia, alias 'The Fair God,' alias 'Donny,' and well known to the police of New York, London, Paris, Madrid, and Savin Rock."

Wynne offered her hand and looked into the light eyes with the sensation of being X-rayed. But it is doubtful if she was any more impressed by Donny than he was by her. Notwithstanding all he had heard in praise of the physical perfections of Wynne—or because of it, perhaps—this Cuban high lord

and multimillionaire had expected to find her merely a pretty young thing, of which the name is legion, or had been so for Donny's wide and favored experience. Don Edmundo was a connoisseur of beauty in its every shape, manner, and form. The leisure moments of his very busy life had been devoted to the search for beautiful objects, and his collection of them was partly material and partly abstract. He could buy a Turner sunset, because he was very rich, but he had also a power of visualization that made his mind a picture gallery for the wonderful source of such inspiration. In the present instance, it needed but one glance to convince him that Lorrie's wife was the most beautiful creature he had ever seen.

As for Wynne, Donny's striking personality naturally impressed her, but quite impersonally, and the next moment she found herself being presented to Lady Audrey and her sister-in-law, Lady Charteris, and Mrs. Doremus and her daughter Aileen, and all the rest. Wynne became rather dazed. She scarcely realized what was going on until she found herself in a swift launch which was foaming up to the landing.

There, while the others were chattering like a flock of parrots, Wynne found herself confronted by a tawny giant with sleepy yellow eyes and long, thick yellow hair.

"You know the place," said he: "Where can I get some macaroons?"

"Macaroons?" Wynne gasped.

"Yes," he answered plaintively, then turned to the others. "Wynne is going to show me where to get some macaroons," said he. "The rest of you have my permission to do what you like." His big paw folded about Wynne's elbow. "Donny hasn't a macaroon on the ship, and my system requires them. Good-by, you white folks," he sighed, and before she knew

what was happening, Wynne was being guided gently, but firmly, toward the shore end of the wharf.

"But I don't believe there's a macaroon to be had on the Zone, Mr. Applebo."

"Harold," he corrected soothingly.

"Well, then, Harold," Wynne laughed. "What do you want of macaroons?"

"I'm on a diet," he answered sadly. "Macaroons are the nourishing element. Without macaroons, tea is like worm-wood and gall. I must have macaroons. Besides, I'm a poet, as of course you must have heard, and macaroons are most stimulating to my muse."

Under this chaff Wynne began to recover herself, as Applebo intended that she should.

"I should think your wife might stimulate your muse," she retorted. "She's beautiful enough."

"That's just the trouble," sighed Applebo. "She's too stimulating. My disobedient children share in this defect. Macaroons are the soft pedal. With an unlimited supply of macaroons, I might be able to write wonderful verse and in my idle moments paint flowers on fans." He shook his head, and the long yellow hair flapped around his ears. "I was sorry that I came on this cruise, but now I'm glad. My little schooner is lying off Miraflores, and when I think of the macaroons in her ice box, I could sit down on one of these bales and weep."

"If it's as bad as that," Wynne answered, "I'll make you some."

"Can't be done," groaned Applebo. "I tried it myself aboard the yacht, but there were only salted almonds, evaporated cream, and egg powder. It was a failure. I'm so glad that you're coming with us, Wynne, and Lorrie, too. We were classmates, you know. But I never cared much for Lorrie and Donny and the Reverend Jim when we were at Yale. They were too ardent.

and unaesthetic. I liked Donny the best, because he got my place in the boat and saved me wasting in idle athletics the time that I spent afterward in the study and creation of epic verse."

Wynne took a sidelong look at the chest and shoulders and big-boned arms.

"How did he happen to get your place in the boat?" she asked.

"Because he was better fitted for it," sighed Applebo. "I was not constructed for a galley slave. In the midst of our exercises, I sometimes paused to reflect on a madrigal or an ode to a crab caught on the blade of the stroke oar. The effect was demoralizing to the other parts of the machine. After having twice turned us over in the early spring—once off the breakwater and once at the mouth of a sewer—I was informed that my services were no longer required. Donny—God bless him!—took my place. It was really a blessing. It gave me time to write my masterpiece entitled, 'Ode to a Young Mother.' It was published by a magazine called *Our Babies*. I wrote the same poem in Danish, French, German, and Italian, and I hope it may meet with appreciation. Up to this time I haven't heard."

Wynne listened to these ramblings with a mixture of astonishment and suspicion. She looked askance at the tawny Hercules at her side and wondered if he were trying to make fun of her or was merely half-witted. She remembered having met him at the church when she was married and having had a certain sense of comfort when her hand had fallen into his great fluke, while he had rumbled in a purring way, "God bless you, little sister." Then others had intervened, and she had scarcely thought again of Harold Applebo. Once, when she asked Lorie about him, he had answered:

"Wait till you meet him. I never could make him out. He's a freak. He

must have some sense, though, because he graduated *summa cum laude*, and nobody ever caught him in the act of doing any work."

A flock of parrots flew squawking overhead, and Applebo watched them contemplatively. As he looked up and the mane of yellow hair fell back over his collar, Wynne was struck by his resemblance to a lion. He had the same corrugations of the forehead, the same straight, wide nose and feline mouth. His eyes, also, were lionlike, being tawny in color and holding a distant look. She could not have told whether she considered him handsome or not.

"Did you ever eat a parrot?" he asked.

"Yes," Wynne answered. "The men shoot them sometimes. I've eaten monkey, too."

"I shouldn't care to eat a monkey," said he. "They resemble nigger babies too closely. I prefer snake, when cooked by somebody who understands curry. But eating doesn't appeal to me any more than drinking or smoking."

"What does appeal to you—besides macaroons and poetry?" Wynne asked.

"You do," he answered. "You suggest a fresh northern flower-fighting for existence when transplanted to a southern clime. You've bleached out since your wedding, but I think you are even more beautiful. I shall dedicate an ode to you and call it 'The Homesick Rose.' Excuse me, but there's a negro beating a donkey. I must go over and ask him not to do so."

He padded across the street with a feline gait to where a huge black brute of a Jamaican negro was maltreating a small, jaded animal with mange. Applebo's admonition was short and curt, but the negro seemed impressed, for the flagellations promptly ceased. Applebo returned.

"What did you say to him?" Wynne asked curiously.

"I told him that I was a wizard from

the North and that if he beat that donkey any more, even if I were not there to see, I would put a hoodoo on him that would make him break out in sores and have such violent cramps that he would grind up stones in his teeth. I said that I had done the same thing before and that the man went crazy from the pain and set himself on fire. Let's walk along the shore to the De Lesseps monument. I want to see if his expression has soured since I was here last. Don't you hate palm trees? They're so shabby at close range. Where do you get such nice clothes in this hub of the shabby universe?"

"Panama isn't so bad," Wynne answered.

"I don't think I should care to live in a coffee-colored country," said Applebo. "I should be afraid of taking on the local tint."

"Like me," sighed Wynne.

"No, you are the cream poured into the coffee. I'm glad that I'm happily married, as otherwise I should certainly fall in love with you, and falling in love entails so many annoyances. I'm better off with a wife who illtreats me, and two very young and disobedient children. Do you like children? I don't like anybody's but mine. That is the way with most people. Look at that nigger baby with a bananabelly. I suppose his mammy thinks him quite a beauty."

"I think he's a little black duck," said Wynne, "and I'm going to buy him a slab of that guava paste. It can't be any worse for him than the bananabelly's crowded into his little wame."

She accomplished this charitable act while Applebo watched her critically.

"Your fingers are all sticky," said he. "You may wipe them on my hair if you like."

"I'm afraid that would be too intimate for our short acquaintance," laughed Wynne.

"Oh, no. You see, Lorrie and I are

brothers, so you are a sister-in-law. Still, if you feel that it would be a liberty, you may wipe them on my sleeve, instead," and he offered her an elbow that suggested the knee of a horse, the sleeve of which bore a greasy stain. "Wipe your fingers on that stain. I'd offer you a handkerchief, but I never carry one."

"Why not?" Wynne asked, accepting his invitation.

"Because I never have a cold and never perspire and have no glasses to polish. I have no more need of a handkerchief than I have of a crutch, so why carry one?"

"Why, indeed?" Wynne answered.

"Rub harder," said Applebo politely. "Then the stain will look as if it had just been made instead of being half eradicated. There's nothing more slovenly than near cleanliness. Untidiness is to be found only in humans and domesticated animals. When a wild animal becomes untidy, it is because the end is near. I am a domestic animal and therefore frequently untidy."

"I'm not so sure about your domestication," said Wynne, "but I wish you'd tell me why you like to lead people to believe that you're a fool. Because you're not, you know."

"I see that you have found me out," sighed Applebo, "so I'll tell you my secret. As you say, I am not a fool. My intelligence is of a very high grade. I don't try to make people think that I'm a fool. I try to make them think that I'm trying to make them think that I'm a fool. Then, unless they're fools themselves—which between you and me and the shade of Socrates most of them are—they become wary of me. Playing the fool for one's own amusement and that of one's shipmates is quite a different matter. Every social gathering ought to have a fool in the company. I am the official one of ours, though in danger of losing my billet by the presence of the genuine

article. Aileen Doremus is trying her utmost to make one of Donny."

"In what way?" asked Wynne, really interested.

"By marrying him. Now that you are one of the family, you are entitled to know its chamber politics. Besides, I like to gossip. The Doremii are the only rank outsiders. The rest of us are united by the sacred bonds of fraternity and the more fragile ones of matrimony."

His yellow eyes turned lazily on Wynne's, but seemed to look past them. She felt herself flushing, and it annoyed her.

"Do you think they are so fragile?" she asked.

"Mine are," sighed Applebo. "Once in the sanctity of our conjugal coop, Hermione will probably beat me because I carried you off by *force majeure*. She always does that when she sees me absorbed in the interest of a fresh inspiration. She can't be made to understand that the pursuit of my muse makes this imperative. You see, Hermione has never quite forgiven me for thinking that she was her sister, while the price I paid for the abstraction that cost us both so dear has been five years of slavery and two very disobedient children, yclept respectively Christian Bell and Cecil Heldstrom Applebo. Cecil is a year younger than Christian, but already beats him to a pulp. He unfortunately inherits my strength and his mother's temperament. Christian inherits both our strength *sans* his brother's violence. Watching them closely when in strife, I am becoming convinced that he lets Cecil wallop him. My reason for thinking so is logical, be-

cause Christian can wallop the little boys that wallop Cecil. Don't you like Donny?"

"Of course I do," Wynne answered.

"Of course," Applebo assented sleepily. "He likes you, too. He's going to like you a lot more. He's fallen in love with you at first sight—just like Lorrie and me. When I carried you off just now, his face was like Christian's when you take a stick of candy out of his hand. The old pirate was looking through his eyes. You know, Miraflores was originally a pirate settlement. Donny's ancestors were pirates—noble birth with a strain of royalty and their piracy more or less legalized, according to what luck they had and how much they disgorged to the royal hand which they fed. Donny himself is quite wonderful, Wynne, but so are most modern perfections of early inventions. Have you got any money, Wynne?"

"What?"

"What? Oh, I came off without any and I see a café."

"Tell me some more about Donny," Wynne demanded. "The café can wait."

"I can tell you better over a dish of tea—even without the macaroons," Applebo complained.

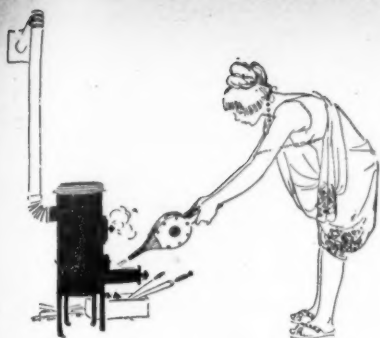
"But we're going to have tea on the yacht at five," Wynne answered, "and, besides, I've only got a little small change." She looked into her purse. "Seventy-five cents," said she.

"That will buy us a pot of tea," murmured Applebo, guiding her toward the café. "I'm thirsty and very tired. There's nothing like saving one's strength."

TO BE CONTINUED.







# Yesterday's Roses

By F. E. Bailly

Author of

"Her Feet Beneath Her Petticoat—" etc.



*Mais on sont les neiges d'antan?*

VILLON.

Unborn to-morrow and dead yesterday—  
Why fret about them if to-day be sweet?

OMAR KHAYYAM.

MIKE SEXTON sat in his silk pajamas watching his boy fold a silk shirt and place highly polished brass buttons in a clean drill tunic. Every one wears silk in East Africa. He sat on the veranda outside his room in the Green Gables Hotel, a charming edifice of corrugated iron, and stared straight out into eternity. He watched the cherry color of the buginvilleæ that clambered wantonly over a rustic archway melt into the scarlet flowers of a flame tree farther back, which in turn lost itself in the dun carpet of the plains and the tawny-blue of the distant hills.

The Swahili boy sang a little song, making it up to suit the occasion. He explained that he was working and looking after his master. It went to a sort of plain song, repeated over and over, with a compass of about five notes. By some remote common ancestry of melody, it recalled to Sexton certain banjo music coming from very far away when he had first kissed Wanda Mathurin on the river at Bourne End, one desperate evening in June five years before. He could smell the greeny smell of the water, distin-

guish through the summer twilight the glow of Wanda's cigarette and the slender lines of her figure, softened by the poetry of one of those evening gowns only Wanda could wear.

How good those days had been, with his bungalow making a perfect home for a wanderer at rest for the moment, and Wanda staying close by in the Kelley-Smiths' house boat! Muriel Kelley-Smith knew her part so perfectly. He always dined on board and always took Wanda out in the punt after dinner. Everybody knew and nobody cared. Life was so simple, so natural—just the river and the stars and a man and a girl floating idly on the stream, very happy, very lazy, understanding one another perfectly.

She knew all the people he knew; she was one of life's adventurers, even as he. She was too beautiful, too clever to find existence difficult at any time. She could earn her living by half a dozen means—writing, drawing, music; or, apart from any of these, her personality alone could make her invaluable in dozens of enterprises. She gathered the flowers along life's pathway at will, but she was always his par-

ticularly. She would not allow any one to dispute his claim during his annual leave from Nigeria, whence he had come east with the Nigerian Brigade.

With a little start, Sexton realized that war held him in its grip, that there was no longer any Wanda, that he must dine in Nairobi with Mrs. Carrington, and that an hour's motor run lay before him. He stood up slowly and turned away toward his bath.

## II.

The Ruero Road spun out before him, a silver ribbon in the moonlight. A stray Congoni deer or two cantered across the road, frightened by the glare of the lamps, and over the plains he caught sight now and again of a zebra. Within the hour he had swung his little car over the awkward, white-painted wooden bridge, and was running through the outskirts of Nairobi. He turned in through the gateway of the house and drew up before the veranda. A house boy, in spotless white robe and red cap, noiseless in bare feet, led him to the drawing-room, with the inevitable mats on the floor, piano, and cabinet gramophone. There he waited.

All the old restlessness of the wanderer seemed dancing through his blood. The cool evening, with the dry earth drenched in sheer white moonlight, strong enough to read by, could not calm his fretting nerves. He wanted Wanda more than he had ever wanted anything in his life. In default came Mrs. Carrington, veiled in a fluffy black dinner gown obviously from "home," white-shouldered, white-necked save for a little V of sunburn, sparkling, pretty, consciously full of devilment. She ran toward him, hands outstretched, laughing up into his face with the frank daring that Africa bestows on pretty women.

"Welcome to the noble Captain Sex-

ton!" she drawled, in her little, cool, tantalizing voice. "You see, I've done what I could to be beautiful. We aren't in England, most tall, most handsome, rather cross-looking young man! This is one of our few frocks. Will it do?"

She spread out her skirts and looked at him in mock anxiety. Their shortness revealed delicate silk-stockinged ankles and little feet in satin slippers. She knew that she was adorable, and this man staring, and her husband far away on service. And it was evening, and Africa, and there would be food and wine and a man to torment. Her mocking laugh rang out again. He was so big and bored, and she knew perfectly well how maddening it must be for him. Why, he had lived in the bush for nine months without even seeing a white woman.

"You put my poor service kit to shame," he answered quite steadily, giving her smile for smile. They might have been in calm, respectable England for all the sign he made. She rather admired him. There was something about these men from home. "I've got a corner table at the Mar-mion. I hope you'll like it. Probably you'll see all the King's African Rifles in mess kit and be ashamed of me. Women are very heartless."

"It's necessary. We have our reputations to think of. And remember this is Africa, where people find themselves capable of all kinds of things. Are we going in your car?"

The impassive house boy brought her a warm evening coat, for the nights are cold in Nairobi and a wood fire burned on the wide hearth. Mike took it and held it for her. Then they went out to his car, a little two-seater with a cabriolet body he had bought for his month's leave, and climbed in. The boy closed the door. They were alone, with all Africa for a playground and no one to tell tales, and he had not

seen a woman for nine months, and he wanted Wanda.

"You must have had thousands of adventures in the bush, Mike," said a cool voice at his side.

She had turned her small, tantalizing face toward him. Little wavy strands of hair half hid one small ear, and her shoulder leaned gently against his. But the road into Nairobi is precipitous in the extreme, and dim ox carts lurk for the unwary. So he only laughed, and kept his glance straight ahead.

"My adventures in the bush are very dull. Women are the only real adventures. You, for instance, are an unknown country. I have no map or compass to guide me, no stars. What am I to do?"

"I wonder you don't jump out of the car!" she mocked him, and laughed again.

They swept along Government Road, already gay with its evening trail of cars and rickshas with lanterns swinging in the hands of the boys in the shafts. Always there were two people—a man and a woman.

The lounge of the Marmion seemed like heaven to Sexton after bully and biscuit in the bush for so long. He loved the lights, the appointments, the women with their men.

Desirée Carrington cat-walked by his side across the lounge and passed to their corner table in the dining room. Sexton reflected with vague satisfaction that he had the prettiest girl in the place. She could not have been more than twenty-six, and Africa had not yet robbed her of her coloring. But mentally he existed in town, dining with Wanda at the Berkeley. He knew he was in luck as luck went in Africa, but the call ran in his blood, and if he could not have the woman he wanted, then it might as well be the bush for all he cared. But a dinner guest is a dinner guest, and he would see that his did not suffer for the sins of Fate.

"And why are you living out in the wilds at the Green Gables, Mike?" queried Desirée. "There's only the hotel and the railway station for miles. Why bury yourself on leave?"

"I went there for the shooting. It's not half bad."

"But you don't shoot. You motor in to the club and play tennis with me and give me tea and take me home, and sometimes you stay to dinner. I don't know if you save your conscience by being twenty miles away. You'd better come into town before your petrol allowance is used up."

"But you don't want me. You've got dozens of men running after you. You'll be fed up soon, and then I shall shoot."

"I was a good little girl  
Till I met you;  
I was a good little girl,  
My words are true.  
And then you told me the tale,  
You all always do.  
I was a good little girl  
Till I met you!"

sang Desirée under her breath. She had fascinating devils in her eyes, and her arms, propping her rounded chin, seemed made to cling around some one's neck. And the lights and the wine and Desirée were going to Sexton's head. There was bitterness in his heart, as there must be when the world holds only one woman and she is seven thousand miles away, but nature is insistent and will not be denied. Desirée sat enjoying his torment. Presently, perhaps, she would reward him—a little—or perhaps he would take matters in his own hands, and then—Her lips parted in a little sigh of laughter. Then she would be exonerated. You cannot deny a determined young man in Africa with only the stars to see. And there was a sort of suppressed, grumbling fury about him that attracted her infinitely. She sipped a green liqueur and smoked one of Sexton's cigarettes.

"And what will the robins do now, poor things?" she inquired. "You can't take me to a theater, because there isn't one. There are only the pictures. I suppose we shall be virtuous and shake hands properly at nine, and I will thank you for my nice evening, and you will go back to your Congoni and guns and things. But even then I shall have been very lucky, of course. Shan't I?"

"The luck is all mine, on the other hand," replied Sexton with magnificent courtesy. "My privilege has been great."

Desirée made a face.

"After that, we will go, please. Anything more would be an anticlimax."

The little car flitted noiselessly upward out of the town. They passed Desirée's house, but he never checked the speed. She looked at him curiously, and said nothing. Two miles farther, she put a hand on his arm.

"I don't live at Clairmont or Kiambu, Mike," she murmured. "Where are you taking me? There's nothing to do out here."

He laughed, and stopped the car by the roadside in the shadow of a group of tall gum trees. There were lights in his tired blue eyes as he turned to her.

"You can't torture me all the time for nothing, Desirée," he said, and crushed her in his arms.

She put a hand over her lips and fought hard for a second, but he only took it away and kissed her and kissed her till she lay breathless and acquiescent. Yet still, a helpless captive, her eyes laughed at him and dared him.

"I'm—not—a tame woman—am I?" she gasped between kisses. "We're a nice pair—Mike."

At midnight Sexton flung himself into a cane lounge in his room at the Green Gables, mixed a whisky and

soda, and lit a pipe. His head ached, his eyes burned, and he felt very miserable. His little amourette was turning to dust and ashes in his mouth, as all amourettes do. He lay smoking, and cursed the universe because he could not have what he wanted and did not want what he had. Life is very bitter sometimes.

He reached out a hand for his writing case and took from it a photograph of Wanda. He studied the face with that patient intensity of affection which is man's alone, because women do not persist in their illusions. He did not need the photograph. He had kissed the real face so often wherever a kiss could rest that he required no reminder. But he gazed into the fearless eyes until the photograph became indistinct, and at last, putting it away, he lay down again and suffered until he felt old and haggard and wished he were a woman who could cry.

### III.

Wanda Mathurin lay upon her white-enameled bed in her flat near Oxford Street, wrapped in an ash-gray silk kimono. Her fair hair hung in masses over her shoulders, a box of chocolates stood conveniently near, her beautiful face wore an expression of resigned discontent, and she read rather absently Mike Sexton's last letter, more than two months old, which had arrived the day before. It was very typical. It told her with candid brevity the naked facts of the campaign, it referred with longing to certain historic occasions familiar to them both, it told her he wanted her, and ceased. Having read the letter, Wanda felt less than ever attracted to her dinner engagement; yet, since the hour of six approached, she sat up and began slowly to pull on one silk stocking. The folds of the kimono fell away from her, and she eyed her reflection in the glass door of her wardrobe rather resentfully.

"You're quite beautiful and you want loving and he knows how to love you," she murmured. "He's very strong, although he can be so gentle, and you know he's stronger than you and like it. But he's far away, and no one else will do, and, oh—*damn!*"

She dressed almost savagely. When Lieutenant Heriot called for her at seven, he knew all the signs and prepared to exercise great tact. Being a poet and no man, he had found oblivion in a staff billet connected with a non-combatant corps, where he frequently worked fourteen hours a day with becoming humility. Life had long ago taught him his place even in peace time, and in war he was only too happy to be allowed to breathe at all, instead of being pole-axed on the spot for a useless weakening. Nevertheless, he had a certain understanding of women.

"You look very beautiful, Wanda," he said gently, "even if you despise me more than usual to-night and feel all cross and raggy. I've got a table at the Carlton and a horse and cart to take us there. Directly we arrive, you shall have a 'soul's ruin,' and then you'll feel better. It's a filthy world, and all the decent men are overseas, but thank God we still have a little drink left!"

Wanda actually smiled.

"Help me on with this coat arrangement, you ridiculous thing," she answered. "I don't go out with people I despise. I s'pose you fished for that, and don't deserve it. I want some one to beat me or kiss me or something. Come along before I cry over your nice brass buttons."

"In this age of blood," continued her cavalier, "I hardly dare refer to *belles lettres*, but I may perhaps quote a trifle I once wrote:

"And if you ask me why, *chérie*,  
And plead your gown and pout,  
Are not in love and longing curled  
The laughing lips of all the world?  
And some day we shall die, *chérie!*"

I mean, try and bear up. Even I am better than nothing. At least I can open doors and tip waiters and tell you your eyes are like the fish pools of Heshbon."

"Shut up, George, unless you want me to howl outright! I don't want to die. I want to live and be loved and love a little myself. And life is so short, and just now the whole world's so hopeless. What am I to do?"

The poet's mouth set a little. He had good instincts, even if the explosion of bombs made him jump.

"The best people simply remain true to type," he explained. "They're not responsible for the state of the world. They have their standards, which no conditions alter, and there is a sort of comfort—barren, I admit—in that. Of course you must remember that I am quite foolish."

Silence fell, while the horse and cart jogged onward. As they reached the entrance of the restaurant, Wanda looked up.

"You're quite right, George. One's traditions always leave something to live for. How fortunate to have traditions!"

"And 'soul's ruin,'" added her host. "Waiter, bring two, please, quickly, if you understand what 'quickly' means."

Wanda watched gratefully while he shepherded her through dinner and took her to exactly the right play for her particular mood. He was one of those people who are not soured by the fact that they cannot have all they want. Obviously he loved Wanda, but he also esteemed her, as he might some perfect picture belonging to another. Without trying to steal the picture, he could admire it when the chance occurred. And it is always a privilege to comfort one's best-loved even when the sorrow arises because only you, not the fortunate one, are available. Wanda knew all this, and it did not lessen her gratitude, but it increased

her emotion, and much emotion made her a little limp, so that in the horse and cart she rested against her friend. He knew exactly what it was worth, and yet he would not have exchanged the moment for any selected epoch in heaven.

They went up to her flat in the lift, and she sank rather wearily into the chesterfield in her sitting room. With a gesture, she indicated whisky and soda; then threw back her coat and clasped her hands on her knees. She was very beautiful. Her skin had a golden texture that goes with a certain fairness, and she carried her head like a princess. She took one of his cigarettes, and he leaned against the mantelpiece watching her. She looked up swiftly and surprised for one second his soul in his eyes. A wave of tenderness swept over her. She got up and moved toward him and placed her hands on his shoulders.

"You may kiss me to-night, old thing," she said gently, her eyes very wide and starry. "You have before, you know. It marks a stage in one's friendship with a man, doesn't it? In a way, you and he are never really at your ease together till he's kissed you, unless he's a patriarch. And I want to be comforted, and you've got some blue devil gnawing at your heart."

He sat down on the chesterfield and drew her into his arms. She could not see his face, because her own lay on his shoulder, and so she could not read what was written on it. But he stroked her hair with fingers that left very little untold in their infinite tenderness, and doubtless she understood. Presently he began to talk softly to her, and from a sort of emotional Pisgah, whence he could see a promised land not for him, he comforted her as she desired.

"I expect I know whom you want. I don't wish to seem mixing up myself with other people's affairs, but it's quite

plain, and you and I know each other fairly well, Wanda dear. Of course you're made for one another. You're both thoroughbred and romantic and adventurous. You've both got that sort of breathless confidence that comes of being perfectly fit. And you know better than I that he loves you. How could he help it? You mustn't be afraid or miserable. As things have turned out, he's got to scrap on the other side of the world. You must wait on this till he comes to you. I s'pose you're thinking of this odd chance to-night. Well, it's only an odd chance, and you know he'd go out with your name on his lips and your picture in his heart, and could eternity give you any more?"

But she only said, "I want him! I want him so!" She turned her wet eyes and her shaking mouth toward Heriot, and he kissed her very gently, once.

"Remember," he ended, "your traditions leave you something to live for. And what you've had already nothing can ever take away."

He stood up to say good night. She put both her hands in his, and he raised them to his lips.

"You've been a perfect dear to me. I don't deserve it, but you also have traditions. Good night, my friend," she said.

#### IV.

In the morning, with breakfast, her maid brought Wanda a cable. It came from Nairobi and it said: -

Happy returns of our happy days. Flourishing. How are you? SEXTON.

Wanda's heart sang. Her fears fled, her sadness melted away. He was well, he remembered, he asked for news. There was only one greater joy—to have him with her. In the meantime, she could afford to wait.

She jumped out of bed, ran into her sitting room, and snatched a telegraph



pad from the writing table. A day or two later, Sexton received an orange envelope from the post office.

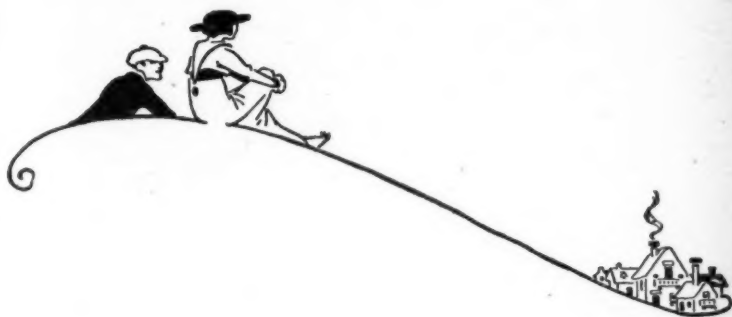
Topping. Love.

MATHURIN.

he read, and smiled. The heavens might fall; she felt topping, and she loved him.

The roses of yesterday do not fade.

The tree that bore them, planted by faithful lovers, scatters its happy petals down the pathway of the ages, and for every bloom that falls, new buds appear. The scent of the roses of yesterday gives to-day its fragrance, and the soft glow of their petals tinges the dawn of to-morrow.



# TROUBADOUR'S SONG FROM "LILITH"

AH, listen, dear!  
The burning hands of Spring  
Are on the world's green girdle. Love is here,  
Long waited. So I sing.

To sing thee soon  
A madder song than this—  
Writ in the waning of an olden moon  
To win the first-born kiss!

Ah, yearning face,  
Too mystically fair!  
Sweet, I would find thee in a hidden place,  
And, trembling, loose thy hair!

Darling, the year  
Sows flowers in thy heart!  
Love, who am I to tell thee in a tear  
How beautiful thou art?

GEORGE STERLING.



# The Effervescence of Nicolette

By Josephine A. Meyer

Author of "The God of Fools," etc.

## II.—"Joseph"

**Z**OUNDS!" quoth Nicolette.

Her husband glanced across the table calmly and waited for her to look up from the letter that had evoked her wrath.

"Listen to Ethel! 'I don't know how he came to look at me twice. Really, dear, I am so small, so unworthy——' Bah!"

"Sometimes," suggested Timothy, "when things are very small, you *have* to look twice. You might tell her that."

"This is no time to be frivolous, Tim. When can I get a train to Glenville?"

"Good Lord, you're not going to butt in?"

"Am I not? Wait and watch."

"Of course you realize that the one who butts in is usually the goat in the end."

"It's Ethel—my Ethel. I lived with her steadily at college for four years—and now!" Nicolette groaned.

"Love makes queer changes," said Timothy sententiously.

"Love might transform Ethel to an oyster, yes—but not to a worm. No, Ethel is ill—very ill. She can't really be in love with a Joseph Surface."

"Maybe he is a god."

"Oh, no doubt of it! Listen: 'I won't say he is handsome. To some his great, strong head, his deep gray eyes, his large, firm mouth——' No, really I can't. It's disloyal. But here's Joseph's character. 'He is essentially strong. His ideals are so high and vast and noble that I blush to feel how far short of them I fall. He does not talk

unless he has something real to say. He weighs carefully many things that seemed to us minor and insignificant merely because we had not the greatness of soul to appreciate their value. Scarcely anything escapes his keen, critical observation, the searching eye of the idealist, passionately opposed to anything that smacks of pettiness or dishonor. He cannot brook——' Oh, Timothy, it's really 'brook!'" and Nicolette bowed her pretty head in her arms among the breakfast dishes.

"Cheer up, dear, and sit up, too, because your hair is in the marmalade. And now listen to sense. That girl is in love with a masterful man, and even you, my omnipotent darling, are helpless against the combination. That's the way it gets Ethels."

"It can't be! Not my Ethel!"

"It is. Besides, he may be quite a decent chap whom she's misrepresenting. Lots of people have that sort of enthusiasm."

Nicolette knit her brows and thought deeply.

"Well, there's only the one thing to be done. Timmy, I must leave you. You can have the children."

"For good?" asked Timothy mildly.

"Oh, no, just a week. I couldn't stay away from Susan more than a week. And you'll be good to them, won't you, Tim? And you'll write—mail-bags-full?"

"Nick," said Timothy, "though you are doomed to get that cracked little head of yours split open entirely, go,

with my blessing. Harold and Susan shall never know but that their mother died a lady."

Ethel Maynard greeted her friend with Nicolette's telegram still in her hand.

"Darling, it was so sweet of you! Your telegram was so—so—vague. I wasn't sure what you meant. I didn't know you could leave Timothy and the babies so—so easily—at a moment's notice. Why, it was only yesterday that I wrote you that letter!"

"Yes," answered Nicolette, "I got it this morning, but I just couldn't wait to have a look at Joseph."

"Yes, that's what you said in your wire. Who is Joseph?"

"Your Him."

"His name is Herbert, dear. I told you, didn't I? It's a wonderful, strong name—Herbert Grant. And you came just to see him! Well, you won't be disappointed in the least."

"That's what I'm afraid of. I've seen many of your literary effusions at college, Ethel, and all of them most hideous bad, but even you must have some grounds of fact on which to rear the monster you describe, though Tim is sure you haven't."

"What do you mean?" Ethel chilled a little.

"You've made me a latent Joseph exterminator."

"Do you mean Herbert?"

"What's the odds?"

"I don't understand you, Nick. Are you jealous?"

"Oh, Lord! Where is Joseph? I want to see him *now*."

"Herbert is at his office. He'll be at the house for dinner to-night if you can wait till then—two hours and a half."

"You count the hours!" Suddenly Nicolette's sharp voice softened and her snapping eyes grew tender. She put her arm around Ethel's waist as they stood

there on the deserted station platform. "Don't think me a beast, dear, though I am—a scared beast, not entirely responsible for all I do. You've been my Ethel for nearly ten years, and now I want you to be as happy as I am."

Tears welled in Ethel's eyes. She patted her friend's hand and whispered huskily:

"Wait till you see him, Nick. He's—he's just—unbelievable!"

Nicolette withdrew her arm and sighed.

"Hello!" said Nicolette, two hours and a half later. "You are Mr. Grant, aren't you?"

He had just alighted from the trolley at the corner, and now he looked down with a rather startled expression at the small oval face under its crown of soft brown hair.

"I'm Nicolette Meredith Meade. If you haven't heard of me, pretend you have, or I shall have a devastating row with Ethel."

"I beg your pardon," was the grave response. "I did not know you by sight."

"That's Ethel's fault, not her inability. I knew you, instantly."

"From her description of me?" A little glimmer lit his eye. Nicolette searched in vain for the trace of a smile.

"It was marvelous," she said grimly. "I dressed quickly and waited on the corner for you to come. Ethel is probably delayed searching for me. But I wanted to meet you offhandedly—at your best." He did not answer, and they walked a few steps in silence. "Ethel might have put you at a disadvantage," explained Nicolette, and then, when he said nothing, she stopped dead. "For the love of Saint Patrick, speak," she burst out, "or I shall believe all she said about you is true!"

"Would it distress you?" he asked,

with a quick flash that somehow made him look younger.

"Excruitingly!" snapped Nicolette. "But it wouldn't distress you. It's what you try to be." It was easier to go on being flip, now that he had stopped blushing. She hated herself for having been disconcerted at it. "That's right!" she added, sniffing, "Stare!"

"I beg pardon?"

"Don't. I wanted you to stare. I'm afraid you won't keep it up long enough to benefit from it."

He had, in truth, decided to overlook her. His eyes had caught sight of Ethel's white dress beyond the shrubbery, so this was easy. Nicolette cocked her head and smiled.

"That's what I'm afraid of. It's habit with you. You try not to see things that you don't like. But I'm a judgment come upon you. You'll have to see me. I'm like a mosquito on a hot night. Joseph," she added in a sort of wail, as Ethel spied them and came down the path to meet them, "see what you've done to my Ethel!"

"What?" demanded Grant, startled.

"She has a flower in her hair!"

Ethel floated toward her fiancé like a leaf caught in an eddy. She cast a radiant, expectant eye toward Nicolette before her gaze settled adoringly on her lover. Nicolette swallowed hard.

"I went ahead and introduced myself," she explained, "because I was afraid, when you were around, it would be more difficult to get acquainted. Do you know, I was once engaged, too?" she added confidentially to Grant.

"I thought Ethel said you were married." Grant looked puzzled.

"Yes, somehow that put a stop to it."

"Nick!" protested Ethel, laughing. She had felt Grant's fingers clutch desperately at hers, and recognized the call for help. "What nonsense you are talking!"

"It isn't nonsense. That's why I'm

here. Where's your mother, Ethel? And she had the grace to leave them alone.

"It is terrible," said Nicolette, burrowing among the cushions of the swing, "to incur the hatred of a strong man!"

Ethel's mother was a semi-invalid, recovering just now from a recent illness, and Ethel had gone up with her after dinner, to see her comfortably in bed. This interval, for the last few nights, since Ethel and he had become engaged, Grant had spent smoking out here on the veranda among sweet-scented honeysuckle vines that toned in well with his meditations. To-night, he wished he had been the first to see the analogy between Mrs. Meade and a mosquito. Quite unhumorously, he wished she were a mosquito, so he might have the privilege of slapping her.

"I don't hate you," he said without conviction.

"No? How nice! I was thinking of some one else, though," murmured Nicolette drowsily. "Now, if you loved me—as a brother, of course—you would offer me a cigarette."

"A what?"

"Haven't you any? Then would you lend me a puff of your pipe?" She leaned forward and reached out her hand. "I really forgot, Joseph, that you wouldn't smoke cigarettes."

For answer, he pulled a box out of his pocket and passed it to her with lofty disapproval.

"It's just as well for you to know, Joseph," said Nicolette over the flare of the match, "that Ethel used to smoke, too. She'll confess it sooner or later."

"One outgrows some affectations," said Grant somberly.

"Some—yes, Joseph—some." She lay back among the cushions, making a miniature volcano among the hills.

"Why do you call me Joseph?"

Grant kept the irritation out of his voice admirably.

"But you don't want me to call you Herbert on first acquaintance, do you?"

She left his silence unbroken while she puffed contentedly.

"Besides," she added presently, "you're so like Joseph."

"Joseph who?"

She shrugged her shoulders.

"Just Joseph. I like the name, don't you? It's so—strong.

"Why don't you ask me all those questions?" she went on after a good three-minute pause, filled with nothing but the creak of the gently moving swing, the chirp of insects, and the whirr of some distant motor car on the road beyond.

"What questions?"

"In the first place, why the devil I came here. Then, wasn't my husband pleased to be rid of me? But chiefly what have I got against you? Eh, Joseph?"

"I was thinking of something quite different," returned Grant, very deliberately.

"No, Joseph"—she threw away the stump of her cigarette and sat up—"it's really not fair playing against you if you lie. You're at such a disadvantage, there's no sport in it. If you tell the truth, you may shame me as well as the devil. Listen, Joseph, I'm serious now. I love Ethel, and I want to know what you're like. Once in a while, when I make you cross, I think maybe there's something there, but I can't be sure. And I want to know, badly."

"Why?" asked Grant coldly.

He felt he had scored, especially when she did not reply immediately, but tucked up her feet and set the swing in motion. He waited, watching her as the motion of the swing brought her now into full moonlight, now into complete shadow. And then it dawned on him that she was not going to answer

at all, simply because she did not deem it worth while. His sense of triumph vanished. He disliked her intensely. How had she ever been Ethel's friend—Ethel, so big and simple and tender and—understanding? He became aware that Nicolette was staring at him. She looked like an unblinking and shameless kitten.

"Ethel," said Nicolette, "and I have lots and lots in common."

"Indeed we have, dear," broke in Ethel's sweet voice.

"Your beloved"—Nicolette made room for her in the swing—"has just said, 'God forbid!' Nobody but the Lord heard him, and it's really too late for Providence to interfere now."

"I have never heard Ethel mock at sacred things," declared Grant quenchingly.

"I can't—now," murmured Ethel, her face on Nicolette's shoulder.

Nicolette patted her constrainedly.

"Cheer up!" she said. "Some day it will all come back."

"What, dear?" asked Ethel.

"Your sense of humor. Oh, you'll need it so badly! Now, rejoice, Joseph, I'm going up to write to my adoring husband. He's so anxious to hear about you. Shall I come down afterward and read you what I've written?" She stood up.

"No," answered both the others simultaneously.

"Then good night, dear doves. Joseph, I could like you heaps if you weren't going to marry Ethel." She vanished, but returned in an instant. "You've stared beautifully for a start. Good night."

"This man," wrote Nicolette to Timothy, "awakens in me all my latent vices. I don't trust myself in his presence. It may be murder I'm hatching. At any rate, I'm going to the dogs swiftly. To-night I smoked a cigarette—the first in four years, since Harold was a baby and bawled at the reek

of them. And I offered to smoke Joseph's pipe. I would have done it, too. I should never have come and deserted my husband and babies. Oh, how are they? Have you surely written me everything——"

Nicolette broke off and started to cry. Ethel found her wet-eyed over her half-finished letter.

"May I come in?" asked Ethel.

"How many other things have you given up?" asked Nicolette, wiping her eyes.

"Nick dear, why do you try to make him dislike you?"

"Oh, did he tell you he did?" Nicolette wheeled around eagerly.

"Of course not. You are dear to him because I love you."

"Ethel mine, does he always tell you the truth?"

"Nick!"

"Well, you can't trust them," grumbled Nicolette. "Timothy swore to me, when we were engaged, that he never got seasick."

"Nick, you're so—queer about all this! I don't understand you," protested Ethel, distressed.

"You're queer, and I'm blessed if I understand you," retorted Nicolette. "What else have you given up for him beside humor and cigarettes?"

"I would give up everything for him!" said Ethel, with sudden enthusiastic defiance. "I'd lie down in the mud and let him walk on me!"

"And he's going to do it some day if you keep on. Ethel, you're making him as unnatural as you described him. Why, I begin to believe he wouldn't be half bad if he were spanked."

"That's just silly, Nick." Ethel did not smile.

"Well, made ashamed, then. If we could only catch him in something—stealing or killing. He might learn to hate me well enough for felonious assault——"

"Please, Nick——"

"I suppose he couldn't be found to be marrying you for your money?"

"The Grants have always had enough money never to notice it," retorted Ethel snobbishly.

"Well, I might trip him up in a room full of company and send him sprawling flat—arms out—so." Nicolette illustrated maliciously.

"That would cause him confusion, but not shame," replied Ethel, in a perfect imitation of her fiancé's own voice.

"And, alas, he'd realize the difference! Ethel, if you've got to marry him, for goodness sake, do it to reform him and, above all, let him know it."

"Rubbish!" snapped Ethel. "Good night." And she went out, slamming the door.

Nicolette gazed at the door with a growing smile.

"Thank God her temper's still working!" she breathed at last in pious relief.

"Timmy," wrote Nicolette, three days later, "Joseph is dent-proof. Whatever snake there is concealed in his bosom is well protected by his concrete wall of reinforced self-satisfaction. I fear you were right. Ethel is bent on destruction. So I'm coming home to-morrow. As a match breaker, I'm the pink of failures. I'm discouraged and blue, and my ambition is dead. I want my late divorced family very, very badly. Tell me, are the children forgetting me? It must be awful, Timmy, for a mother to be dead."

"To-night I am lonesome and sad and shall probably be very nice to you," said Nicolette to Grant, when Ethel had taken her mother up to bed. "You're as hard as a rock and as pitiless as a desert or I would ask you to sit in the swing beside me and pretend you were Timothy."

Something in her voice warmed Grant's ingenuous heart as he sat on the porch rail and watched her through the smoke of his pipe. She seemed



to be surrendering before that ideal serenity he strove so hard continually to express. He smiled in triumph, but he thought it was the smile of an indulgent father.

"What would you do if I were Timothy?" he unbent enough to ask kindly.

"I'd put my head on your shoulder," answered Nicolette promptly, "and tell you all about that objectionable Joseph."

"Objectionable?" he repeated, still smiling into the bowl of his pipe. She looked frail and half-hearted in the moonlight, and her daring reference to his shoulder had not shocked him as it might have done a week ago, as, indeed, he knew she wished it would.

"Oh, most objectionable, like a looking-glass mountain in a fairy tale. You're all hard, perfect polish. Are you really in love? No"—she got up and stood directly before him—"you can't be in love."

He looked down upon her, reveling in his placidity, till she moved a step nearer and laid her hand flat against his breast.

"That's not a heart." She drew away her hand scornfully. "That's just a clock. Poor Ethel!" She went back to her swing and curled up among the cushions, repeating softly, "Poor Ethel!"

Two things annoyed him—the thought that he had been momentarily disturbed by the touch of her hand and the reiteration of that foolish phrase.

"You judge me heartless," he said severely, feeling that he must interrupt at all hazards, "because I will not—I will not—flirt with you."

"I'd judge you much more heartless if you did, and you engaged," sniffed Nicolette righteously. "But that's a different sort of heartlessness. It's braver. It can be attacked. Yours is so despicably—cautious."

"Cautious?"

"Yes. I've decided you've walled yourself up so tight and set sentries on guard because there's weakness hiding 'way inside you. That's always the way with terribly strong men."

To his deep annoyance, he flushed. This was a challenge. To reassure himself, as well as to defy her, he crossed to the swing and sat down beside her. Of course he could "play Timothy" safely, but instantly she got up.

"Now what on earth did you do that for?" she demanded.

Her action nettled him. It was an impolite insinuation that she did not trust him. It rammed home the insult in her last speech. And he wanted to prove to her that she was wrong again. He stood up, towering over her.

"Sit down there," he commanded calmly.

She threw her head back defiantly. Her narrowed eyes gleamed in the dark.

"Not beside you, O masterful man!" she retorted, with a maddening little laugh.

"Sit down!" he repeated, and trembled slightly in anger.

She moved a trifle, perhaps an accidental swaying of her body that brought her shoulder in contact with his coat. He really thought he was putting out his hands to shove her into the swing, but when she struggled to free herself, he could not let go. It was temper that made him crush her to his breast, and he was seeing red sky-rockets when he kissed her.

Then she broke away, and they faced Ethel, silent in the moonlight.

"*Voilà!*" said Nicolette with breathless calm, patting her hair. "All that remains, Joseph, is for you to blame it all on me!"

And she stalked away.

Nicolette had finished her packing and sat down to write to her chum.

"No doubt I've opened your eyes. I've opened my own," she began.

"Never monkey with an iron wall, because it is there for a good reason. I pulled off a plate, and a tiger jumped out."

But here she stuck. She had a bad habit of telling the truth and so she could not fool herself.

"Of course I made him do it," she mused, "but—but—I never intended to *like* it! Two tigers jumped out, and mine was the one that began it all. Good Lord, Ethel! How you startled me!"

Ethel came into the room quietly. There was a gentle smile on her face and her eyes were dewy.

"Nick," she said, "I'm in love."

Nicolette looked meek and chastened.

"In spite of everything?" she asked in a small voice and without-levity.

"It's with quite a different person," smiled Ethel.

"What?" Nicolette actually turned pale.

"It's with a boy this time," explained Ethel, her eyes twinkling softly, "a silly, bad-tempered, headstrong boy, who needs some one to look after him. His name is Herbert. Joseph has gone away."

Nicolette swallowed hard and crumpled up her letter.

"Ethel—I—I don't deserve it," she breathed at last, awed, "but *you* do. So that's all right. And, Ethel"—she moistened her lips nervously and crushed the letter into a tighter ball—"it was—I was—well—if ever I refer to Joseph again, please—call me—Mrs. Potiphar."



## THE MIGRATION

WHERE do the hurdy-gurdies go  
In winter's reign of frost and snow?

When Boreas, with puffing mouth,  
Sets all the songbirds winging south,  
I think the hurdy-gurdy men

Must pack their box of joyous tunes,  
And vanish wholly from our ken  
Flying in search of Mays and Junes  
Some place where elfin urchins dance  
Upon the pavements of romance.

And there they stay till April comes,  
And all the air with prescience hums  
Of growth and stir and blossoming.  
Then hurdy-gurdy men take wing  
And back they fly to city streets,  
Where presently their music beats  
A gay refrain upon the air,  
And little children everywhere  
Shrill out: "The hurdy-gurdy men  
Are back again, are back again!"

BERTON BRALEY.

# A Harness for the Muse



By Nina Wilcox Putnam and  
Norman Jacobsen

Authors of "The Price of Applause," etc.

FOR the third time that day, Tallman fled to the cellar of the shop and, standing there alone in the dimness, listened to the sound of her voice.

In the shabby old country store above, with its wilderness of dusty merchandise, Esther Cartwright was moving about restlessly, waiting, without doubt, in the hope that he would appear, the heels of her pretty shoes beating a mocking tattoo overhead, as she made some trivial purchase from fat Ed Scotch, his fourteen-year-old assistant.

Lately, she had been making resistance increasingly difficult by coming in again and again—now for a spool of thread, now for a jar of preserves. *Preserves*, when the Cartwright store-room must be laden with them! Next it was pen points, or she had forgotten her parasol— Ah! There it was in the corner! So many thanks to Mr. Victor Tallman for finding it! Then she would be gone, with a dazzling smile that upset him utterly—gone only to return next day before he had himself fairly in hand again. In his subterranean retreat Tallman almost groaned aloud. With nothing to offer her but the risks a poverty-hampered marriage would entail, he was being driven mad by the need to touch her, to tell her— No, no! He must not!

It would not be square to her, the only child of the richest man in Rosemere!

Overhead, the French heels pattered to the door. With a long sigh, Tallman arose from the packing box on which he was seated and mounted the ladder, glancing at the solemn face of the clock as he emerged into the shop. Past four. Thank Heaven, in all probability the struggle was over for that day at least! But almost as he left the top step, Ed approached him, a note extended in one grimy hand.

"She left it," he explained briefly and, turning away, became occupied in the dusting of a bunch of bananas, a way he had of pretending great industry whenever the owner's eye was upon him.

For a moment Tallman stood without opening it. Contact with her letter made him see his shop as did her presence in it—clearly, regretfully, as it was. At other times, he could be oblivious to its defects. But when Esther came in, he would see the broken cases, the dust, the unwanted merchandise, with sudden awful clearness. In particular, he would note the dingy jars of stick candy, and the wish would renew itself that they should magically become great new beribboned boxes, that he might thrust one into her delighted hands. Yet he never tried to make the notion real. And that

was like the rest of his life, he thought bitterly, opening her note. As he suspected, it was an invitation to supper that night.

"I won't go!" said Tallman aloud. "I won't go!"

But by nine o'clock that evening, she had won, and Tallman had not only come to her, but had chased her around the garden, caught her, and demanded that she marry him—all quite in the face of his resolutions.

And now the silence following upon his desperate question seemed an eternity. On the top step of the porch he leaned forward, hugging his knees in an agony of tension, while he looked toward the white blur that meant Esther, so motionless and indistinct there in the deep shadow to which she had retreated. At length she stirred and spoke, her clear voice the only real thing in all the transforming magic of the night.

"No, Vic," she said. "I—I'm sorry, but I can't."

It was a distinct shock. On the instant, the moon seemed to go out, and the world, so enchanting a moment since, became the abomination of desolation.

"Oh, Esther, don't say it!" he begged. "Of course I know I'm nothing like good enough for you, but if loving counts for anything—I—I—Esther, I thought you—well, you don't *dislike* me, surely?"

She gave a little laugh.

"It isn't quite that," she said.

"Then you do care a little?" he cried. "What's wrong with me? Everything, I suppose. But in particular?"

Her sudden change of front almost gave him back sanity, so great was the surprise of it.

"In a way, it's more a question of *what* you are rather than *who* you are that stands in my way," she went on. "No! Now sit still or I'll go in! I admit that *who* you are attracts me.

Your taste, your insight, your kindness—that's all delightful to me."

"But then——" he broke in feverishly. Again she silenced him.

"But then!" she repeated. "What does all this charm of temperament amount to? Dear Vic, I'm going to be a beast. I'm going to speak the truth. You were not a success as an artist, and you never will be. There! I've only said what you already know, for if you had felt that the urge to go on with your painting was a real one, you'd never have given up your studying in Chicago and come home to run your father's store!"

It bore the stinging lash of truth, and he hung his head, wordless before it. The kindly-cruel, smooth voice continued:

"Since your father's death, what have you done? The shop is simply going to pieces! Vic, it isn't because you're a failure as an artist that I won't marry you, nor because you're a failure as a storekeeper. It's because you just don't seem able to do *anything* successfully."

There was a long silence. The moon crept farther up over the heavy tops of the elm trees and traced new maps of silver upon the lawn. A night creature flew by, silent and swift as a thought. Then Tallman spoke, the words hurting his throat.

"There's a lot of truth in what you say, Esther," he replied. "But it's hard for any one to see what a devil of a time a fellow like me has—all the impulses of the creative artist and no real talent. Add to that a loathing of routine work, and you get so discouraged, you just don't care! Can you understand?"

"I wonder!" said she softly. "Perhaps I do, a little. I'm something of a misfit myself. I'd go into father's office if he'd let me. Business interests me. But you should have seen his face when I mentioned it! He simply

couldn't believe that I'd like to do something real in the time between now and that day of greatest reality."

"You mean a home of your own?" said Vic.

"And—kiddies," said she.

He stirred toward her impulsively, but immediately her voice broke in clear and cool, holding him back.

"And to go back to you, Vic," she said, "you ought to harness that vicarious temperament of yours and make it do some work in the world. Suppose, for instance, you wake up one morning and find a Transcontinental Merchandise store opposite your picturesque old ramshackle 'general'? What then? You'll simply be wiped off the face of the earth by them!"

Her voice was so discouragingly impersonal that he felt about for his shapeless soft hat and got to his feet.

"Well, Esther, that's one thing hardly likely to prove a source of worry," said he, trying to meet the only mood she would permit. "Big business won't be apt to bother with so small a village as Rosemere. And I'll manage to get an existence out of my ramshackle 'general,' as you call it—at least until every one in town goes into New Nevah by trolley for their things. There are fortunately a few rheumatic old ladies left who can't travel!"

She had arisen, too, and stood near him. The perfume of her and the soft whiteness of her garments were intoxicating.

"Esther, Esther! If I can in some way make good?" he cried.

She swayed as if a breeze had swept her. Something intangible, yet electrifying, brushed his forehead. A lock of hair? Her scarf? A kiss? He tried to seize her, but on the instant she had melted into the black square of the doorway like a wraith. Her voice came back.

"I don't believe you can!" she said,

and was gone, leaving Tallman to turn dazedly down the veranda steps and make the best of his way homeward through the moon-patched silence of the sleeping village.

Next morning the sun was already sending golden shafts between the great elms of the common when Tallman flung open the shutters of the room that he occupied above his shop and leaned for a contemplative moment on the windowsill. Directly under him was the sign—weatherbeaten and faded and still bearing his father's name: "E. T. Tallman, General Merchandise." On the tar sidewalk below, Ed Scotch was making a pretense of sweeping.

A quarter of a mile away, the cupola of the judge's residence showed between the treetops. Somewhere under that ugly and expensive mansard roof, Esther was still sleeping the sleep of the innocently wealthy. No need for her to arise with the dawn! It was all very well for her to talk of discontent and longing for activity, but the doing of his housework was not the job she wanted, and who could blame her?

From the rear of the building came the odor of coffee and new hot crullers. Victor arose from the windowsill and threw on his garments carelessly. Well, if life was contrary and Esther a torment, there were always Aunt Kitty's crullers.

"Comfort me with crullers, for I am sick of love," he murmured.

Half an hour later, a stubby pipe between his strong white teeth, he stood on the sidewalk and looked long at his emporium. There it stood as it had for forty years or more, presenting what had originally been a sufficiently imposing front to the village street. But now it was only the vain remnant of a past generation. A flight of steps and a veranda led to its center door and bay windows, whose little square panes served rather to conceal than to display

the articles behind them. On one side were tins and beef, tallow candles and preserve jars, pickles and spices, in somewhat fly-specked array. A top shelf bore the despised jars of candy—brightly colored sticks, black licorice, hoarhound, and rock crystal—flanked by patent medicines—Somebody's horse liniment, "good for man and beast," soothing sirup, and quart bottles of bitters. On the other hand were bolts of old-fashioned calico and turkey-red, a pile of harvesting hats, a cruet set in red glass, the veteran of some previous Christmas stock—

He turned away his head, shuddering. But how could they go if no one bought them? Tallman cursed softly and dug his hands deep into his pockets. Then he summoned his assistant. Ed Scotch waddled forth at command, and as soon as he discovered that no active service was required of him, sat down upon the steps.

"Ed," began Tallman, "Ed, if you were the sole proprietor of this commercial establishment, how would you go about making a success of it?"

"Huh?" said Ed Scotch, blinking at his employer.

"I say," replied Tallman with admirable patience, "if you were the boss here, what would you do to improve the place so that it would make money, eh?"

Ed Scotch arose cautiously and stepped down beside Victor. Then he scrutinized the building as if beholding it for the first time.

"Well," said Ed Scotch, "I'd just put in plate-glass winders an' then paint it all up slick an' varnish the inside an' buy new mahogany counters an' electric lights an' new stock an' a soda fountain an'—"

"Hold on!" said Tallman. "That will do for now. And it's just what I suppose is necessary. I've about as much chance of bringing this place up to date as I have of flying! And I'd

hate to do it if I could. Your mahogany counters and varnished insides make my soul sick. It's bad enough to be an old-fashioned grocer, but to be a *modern* one! Ye gods!"

"Huh?" said Ed Scotch.

"I mean I have not the necessary wherewithal to make the improvements that you suggest," replied Tallman.

"Oh!" said Ed Scotch, and went slowly inside, trailing the broom behind him.

A profound gloom settled down upon Victor. Abruptly he turned away from the outward and visible symbol of his failure and went to the post office. There were two pieces of mail for him. He picked them up idly, a frown gathering between his eyes, as he recognized in one of them a returned sketch. The other was a long blue envelope, and Tallman read the printed inscription in the corner. "If not delivered in five days," it said, "return to the Transcontinental Merchandise Stores, Inc."

"Well!" said Tallman to himself. "I wonder what in thunder they want of me. It must be an advertisement."

But at once he remembered Esther's suggestion that this very concern would some day drive him out of business; and it was with a slight sense of foreboding that he tore off the cover and read. Said the Transcontinental:

DEAR SIR: We are about to open a new string of stores through your part of the country. Having been given to understand that you are the proprietor of the only general store in Rosemere, we are prepared to take over your shop and good will at a reasonable figure. From what our agent tells us, we would consider three thousand dollars a fair price. If you care to accept this offer, kindly let us know immediately, and negotiations can be concluded. Yours truly,

K. C. WESTON,

(For the Transcontinental Merchandise Company.)

Address: K. C. Weston, P. O. Box 186, New Nevah.

Tallman reread the letter carefully, a slow red suffusing his face as he did



so. Three thousand dollars! It was absurd, an insult! Confound the impudence of these big corporations! What did they take him for anyhow—an idiot? To step in and freeze a man out of business was the usual method, he understood, and that was bad enough. But the contempt implied in this out-and-out proposal to buy him off at a bargain was just about the limit!

"It's a funny way to do business!" he snorted, and then, perforce, smiled at himself for setting up to be a judge on such a matter. And as he marched down the street toward the little establishment that the world-famous company had held so cheap, it began to take on new merits in his eyes. Why, the stock alone was worth three thousand dollars!

Next day he met Esther in front of the store. His mood of anger was still upon him, and it did not abate at sight of her, despite the fact that she was particularly alluring in white organdy, and that her rose-colored parasol cast a most becoming glow upon her fair skin. Indeed, her very coolness was an annoyance when he remembered that she had been right about the Transcontinental. However, she did not greet him with any recognition of his mood. She was far too absorbed in herself.

"Hello, Vic!" said she cheerfully, just as if their last interview had been the most ordinary in the world. "I've some news for you."

"What?" said Tallman gruffly, his heart afraid. But the sudden doubt was groundless.

"I've won over father!" she announced, twirling the pink parasol. "I'm no longer an idler. I'm taking stenography and typewriting. I go into New Nevah every other day."

The relief was immense. He even felt able to smile and approve this childishness mildly.

"Stenography," said he, "so as to

play at being busy! Would that I could afford to play the same game! Perhaps work would become interesting."

He recalled that letter from the Transcontinental, and for a moment was tempted to speak of it, but on second thought refrained, suddenly resolved by her mocking eyes. He would not sell. He'd be damned if he'd give her that satisfaction!

"It wouldn't hurt you to be busier," replied Esther, looking at the shop critically. "This is an awful-looking place, Vic!"

"It's worth a lot to me!" retorted Tallman, improvising a lifelong conviction. "It was my father's and his father's, and there is such a thing as family tradition."

"Oh!" said Esther. "Well, I must be getting along home. The crowd is coming around to-night to pull candy. Will you be over about eight?"

"No," said Victor, with unnecessary savagery. "I've got some business to attend to!"

He watched her go off down the street, however, with a weakening that she was soon too far away for him to voice without running after her in an undignified fashion. And so he perforce turned into his shop, making the best of his way past Ed Scotch, who was seated on the doorsill consuming one of Aunt Kitty's crullers. The sight of it made Victor hungry. They were most unusually good crullers. And inside the untidy store stood Aunt Kitty herself, with bobbing gray curls and that peculiarly winning, motherly smile of hers.

"Vicky, I need another bag of flour, some cream of tartar and some tataric acid, and some bicarbonate of soda from the drug store, if you want crullers for breakfast," she said. "Can you send Eddy?"

And then she waited, amazed because Victor did not answer her, but

stood instead with his gaze fixed upon her curls and her quaint dress of sprigged calico. Suddenly he spoke.

"Aunt Kitty," said he, "didn't I hear you yesterday telling Miss Hicks you couldn't give her a recipe for your crullers, but that you'd mix her up some, dry, and that she'd only have to add water to make 'em?"

"Why, yes," replied Aunt Kitty.

"Then will you please make more, many more than we can eat, and put them on a dish down here and sit beside it and tell each and every woman who comes in to taste one?"

"Why—why, Victor Tallman! Of course I *could*, but, land sakes, what a notion!" began the bewildered old lady.

"The idea is that we're going to put that dry stuff up in packages," said he, "and see if we can sell it by the pound. Fortunes have been made from lesser things."

Within half an hour, the most conspicuous point in his shop had been transformed into a bower for Aunt Kitty.

"A splendid *genre* picture, by Jove!" said he, admiring his work. "I'd like to paint it. It would sell!"

But instead of making the sketch, which in his heart he knew would not be good enough, he went to his desk and wrote a saucy letter to K. C. Weston, refusing the Transcontinental's offer, and another to the Miller's Pride Flour people, ordering a barrel of their best-grade flour. He would use it in his packages of prepared cruller mixture.

When he had finished this, it was still early enough to go over to Esther's party. As he descended the steps to the sidewalk, he could hear a belated group going by in the direction of the judge's, their nonsensical talk music on the summer night. But instead of joining them, he watched the glimmer of their garments pass up the moonlit

street and, crossing the road, seated himself upon the fence opposite the shop.

His property! But for how long? Sooner or later the trust would run him out of business, force him to accept some beggarly offer or drive him from town. Well, what did it matter? He hated the life, hated the work, and, with a few thousand dollars in his pocket, he could do—what? That was the great question. But if he let his business go, would it not mean that before long he must again work at a trade—and this time as a hireling instead of as his own master? Better make a fight for it and hang on somehow or other until the Transcontinental—confound the powerful brute!—actually drove him into bankruptcy.

In the light of the moon, the shop took on fantastic shapes. Once it had been painted red, but the suns and storms of forty seasons had faded it to a lovely pink. Taken all in all, it was a picturesque old place, and he had several times sketched it. But from a practical point of view, how on earth could it be improved without money—a great deal of money? He thought of those idle sketches of it and smiled. Then he thought of them again, looked at the old shop, sat bolt upright, and whistled.

"Gee whiz!" said Victor aloud. "I wonder!"

It was the very next day that the good people of Rosemere started to give the Tallman shop their serious attention. They began when Ed Scotch puffed up Main Street with a burden of potted geraniums in a wheelbarrow, and was later seen painting the pots with bright colors—vermilion yellow, black. This created some excitement, but it was nothing to that which ran riot when the newly decorated jardinières appeared in prim rows on all the window ledges of "Tallman's," and the proprietor, on a clean new ladder taken

from stock, was discovered in the act of removing the venerable, but cracked and faded sign from above the show windows. Jack Corning, the real-estate and insurance agent, accosted him from the sidewalk as well as his perpetual cigar would permit.

"Going out of business?"

"No! Going into business!" replied Victor, without stopping work.

This was early in the morning, and by noon Esther, on her way to the New Nevah train and her lesson in stenography, stopped a moment to admire the transformation of the shop front. Tallman, again upon his ladder, was putting the finishing touches to another sign—a sign that swung from a quaint wrought-iron arm.

"Like it?" inquired Victor, removing a bouquet of brushes from his mouth. "It's the original sign—my grandfather's. I have refreshed it, but not too much. It still looks old, eh?"

"It looks charming!" cried Esther enthusiastically. "And the flowers in the windows—they are lovely!" Just at this moment Aunt Kitty, newly starched in her sprigged gown, appeared in the door, and Victor explained about her.

"Vic, it's all *very* original!" cried Esther. "Why, every automobile that passes will stop here and buy!"

He gave her a quick glance out of the corner of his eye.

"So I suppose," said he, just as if it were not a wholly new idea. "Just what I intend."

"But you'll have to put in a lot of new stock—gifts and so forth," she went on.

Victor looked at her again and improvised another long-maintained idea. She seemed to inspire them.

"Not at all," said he. "I'm going to carry on an old-fashioned general store *par excellence*! Every one loves such a place. The only difference I intend making between the store as it is

and as it shall be will lie in its dramatization!"

Esther looked at him as if seeing some strange animal, and then burst into laughter.

"Well," said she, "this fantastic idea may succeed! At least I hope it does. Oh, don't come down from the ladder. I must run to get my train. Good-by, Vic, you—artist!"

He stared after her, dwelling on her last words. An artist! She had told him to harness his vicarious artistic temperament; well, did she not see that he was harnessing it with a vengeance?

And such was the beginning of what, at first, the village called his "foolishness." He heard it so termed by more than one acquaintance before the shop had worn its new dress a week. But, hearing it, he looked over his ledgers and counted the increase in his sales.

"It may be foolishness," he said solemnly to the equally impressed Ed Scotch, who sat on the edge of the desk munching a cruller, "it may be foolishness, but it's aroused sufficient curiosity among the neighbors to bring more than twenty people into the place who haven't crossed our threshold since the trolley could take them to New Nevah—and every one *bought*!"

"And most of 'em come back," said Ed Scotch, rather indistinctly because of the cruller.

"Three new accounts this week," nodded Victor. "Ed, did you get off that order the ladies who stopped in the automobile gave?"

"Yep," said Ed Scotch.

"That's the fourth order from transients in two days," said Victor. "I think we'll put out the old benches and paint them yellow, after all."

"Old Uncle Poe White will be settin' on 'em all day, ef yer do," warned Ed Scotch.

"All the better!" exclaimed Victor. "His black face and white topnot would

distinctly add to the picture value. And now for the morning's mail!"

The morning mail contained, beside an agreeable communication from the Miller's Pride Flour people, a long blue envelope of familiar appearance. With a grunt Victor opened it, and as he had expected, read the signature of K. C. Weston affixed to a new proposition from the Transcontinental.

The substance of this communication was that the company, who wished nothing but his good, hoped Mr. Tallman would accept the slightly better offer herewith made.

The implied threat gave Victor a sinking feeling in his middle. After all, what was the new turn that he had taken in the policy of his shop but a freak? He had no money, no backing, no future really; only a sense of the decorative and a touch of humor and insight into the weakness of humanity for being bluffed. How soon would the novelty of what he was offering lose its effect? If he wanted to hold his customers, must he not give them something more than a stage setting? But what?

For a long while he sat very quietly at his desk in the dusky corner, his brows knitted in perplexity, the letter from the trust held tightly between his long fingers. At last he stirred. The idea had come, and he grinned as he bent over the blotting pad and replied to K. C. Weston's communication.

"These are pretty damn' poor letters from such a big concern!" he thought as he wrote. "If they can get away with stuff like this and grow rich on it, I guess I'm not such a dub as I thought I was!"

That night he told Esther a little about his plans. He had not meant to go, but somehow, as evening fell, he could not help it. The moon was waning, but the night was full of sweetness none the less—some of it from the honeysuckle vines on the judge's

veranda, some from the hidden garden, and some from the folds of Esther's blue garment. Victor did not sit on the steps at her feet to-night, but took a chair beside her, emboldened by the excitement born of his great idea.

"It's all so perfectly simple!" he told her enthusiastically. "And, like almost everything else in life that sends you ahead a step, it rests on the rediscovery of a truism!"

"Well?" said she.

"That honesty is the best policy! You know I told you," he went on, "that every one loves an old-fashioned general store. Well, that's so—but what few of them are left usually sell mighty poor stuff. And that's why they pass out of existence and where I come in. From now on, I intend to sell only things I can guarantee. Up to now, I've been careless—thought only of the margin of profit, and precious little of that. But beginning tomorrow, it's to be different. The name of Tallman is going to stand for quality!"

"Why, Vic!" she cried. "You delightful bromide! I thought you just hated the business."

"As a matter of fact," said he, "I'm beginning to find it interesting, now that I'm trying to do it well."

"You're certainly doing it differently from any one else," said she.

Very reluctantly he arose to go.

"I'm getting up early these days," he explained. "So, early to bed, you know!" And still he lingered. "Esther—I—" he was beginning, when up the path came Jack Corning, the real-estate chap, and Esther arose to greet him cordially. The sentence, whatever it was to have been, died on Victor's lips, and he bade them both a solemn "good night" and strode off homeward, kicking savagely at whatever innocent object came within his path.

"Corning!" he muttered to himself.

"That ordinary roughneck! But I suppose, if she admires success so much, he has enough of the conventional sort!"

Three months later, the now familiar blue envelope made its appearance one morning among his letters. Victor broke the seal with a sardonic grin and settled himself back comfortably to peruse it. He was beginning thoroughly to enjoy his correspondence with the Transcontinental's representative, and as time passed, the company had amazingly, incredibly, gone up with a succession of offers, until the thing had almost become a reasonable proposition with which Tallman was playing. By some black magic which was entirely beyond Victor's understanding, the company seemed to know to the dot how his affairs progressed. And now came a figure that really tempted him. Unable to dismiss it from his mind, he seized his hat and went to walk in the open, leaving a crowd of indignant customers to the mercies of Ed Scotch and Aunt Kitty.

Outside, the world rioted in glorious colors and a breeze that was like wine, for it was October. The summer had slipped away almost imperceptibly, so busy had the time been. Beyond the village, he took off his hat, letting the wind rush through his hair. On either hand, the fields lay in bronze and yellow, and up the hills to the north marched regiments in scarlet and gold—young maples and dogwood, amidst the constant cedars. Ahead, the road stretched like a ribbon of white, unrolling from nowhere, and presently along it came Esther, the wind catching her skirts, a short cape fluttering behind her shoulders—Esther radiant with the joy of living. He was glad, yet afraid, for since that night when he had met Corning at her threshold, he had again let her alone, and she, when they met, had shown some coldness.

"You look like the Winged Victory,"

he announced as they met. "May I walk with you?"

"Not at this moment," she laughed, "because I happen to be a little out of breath. Let's sit down somewhere and talk in the seclusion of the country highway."

They found a warm seat on an old stone fence where creepers had hung draperies of scarlet. He looked wistfully at her little head, so bewitching, so unattainable.

"I've not seen you for a long time," he began.

"I've been working hard," she replied. "I go into New Nevah every day. My course is almost ended, and I shall be an expert soon. And you?"

"The business is growing," he replied, "and it's only me that's holding it back."

"You! How?"

"Well," said he, "you see I'm a natural coward about business. I have to have something to urge me on all the time. I never go quite far enough to make the thing really right. It has grown inch by inch, but it's been almost in spite of me. I'd get an idea and put it into execution, and the result would be a small growth and a lot more ideas—but not the courage to try them all at once. I have no capital, you know, and I'm desperately anxious to make good. At the same time, I'm terribly afraid of losing what I have. I keep seeing where an investment would make the thing a really big success, and yet I can't seem to get up sufficient nerve to put my little all into the risk."

"Hm," said Esther, pursing her lips wisely. "That's bad! If once you took such a step, you'd probably be over the big divide and safe on the other side."

"I know," he assented miserably. "And yet I can't seem to do it. To-day I've had an offer—a chance to get out of the whole thing—and I believe I'll



take it—take it and clear out of this town and never come back!"

"Why, Victor Tallman!" said Esther. "You ought to be ashamed! What's the immediate step you ought to take and don't dare?"

"It's something like this," he replied, not looking at her. "The business demands larger accommodations. I've put in a few antiques—began with the things from my own attic. And we're doing a surprising business with old-fashioned calicos and gingham, which Thompson's mill up at East Rosemere still makes. There's a chance for some big connections along these lines. By next summer, I could have a back-ground for it ready, and this time next year I ought to be taking in enough—enough to offer a fairly comfortable living to—to a wife, or my judgment of the power of the automobile trade is all wrong. But——"

"Well?"

"It would take every cent I have in the world to risk it," he declared. "And somehow I haven't got the spirit. In order to succeed, you have to do things for some one else——"

"Vic, you mean me," said Esther softly.

With a little cry, he turned to her, his hands outstretched. She shook her head.

"No, no," she said. "That won't do. It would only be another nursing of that temperament of yours—pandering to its weakness. You'll never make good just for the sake of some one. It's got to be for the thing *itself*—because you care about the job! The spirit won't last, otherwise."

"Well," said he, "maybe something will give me a push in the right direction."

"A push is no good!" said Esther firmly, getting down from the fence. "It's got to be a *jump*!"

That night Tallman did not sleep very well. The little room over the

store seemed haunted by the ghosts of lost and ignored opportunities, and when he dozed at last, it was to dream of Esther, who seemed to be walking farther and farther away down an autumn-blazoned road. And in the evening Victor wrote one of his painful business letters to the Transcontinental, refusing their latest offer. After this, the days followed one another in a sort of mist of indecision. The inclination to let things take care of themselves, to postpone action, to drift, was again upon him. Something would turn up to settle the question, he thought. And at length something did.

It took the form of an unexpected communication from the trust; and when he grasped the full portent of its message, he swore softly under his breath.

Implied in the brief communication from Mr. K. C. Weston was the information that the Transcontinental had had enough of his nonsense—that since he had refused their generous offer to buy him out, they were about to smother him, and that it was nobody's fault but his own; in brief, that their patience was at an end, and since he refused to sell, they would build—would build a strictly modern plate-glassed, electric-lighted shop, and had already purchased the vacant lot opposite the railroad station for that very purpose! Furthermore, as soon as the shop was built, they would proceed to undersell Mr. Victor H. Tallman until his trade dwindled to the point of invisibility. This was not in so many words, of course, but it had no need of being written. Indeed, the brief note of courtesy which informed Victor that all negotiations regarding his business were closed, owing to the company's decision to build opposite the depot, told the story.

For a moment after digesting this amazing, utterly uncalled-for epistle, Victor saw red. So they were going to



take his shop away from him, eh? Take the shop his father had worked in as a lad—the shop his grandfather had built with his own hands, where his, Victor's, first pennies had been earned! Not by a damn' sight they shouldn't! So they intended to come into the sleepy little town and wreck him before he was fairly well started—take not only his business, but with it his very hope of happiness! And they could do it, too. For although the business was catching hold, it would never last over without the winter trade, and this he could not hold unless he put in the necessary improvements, took the necessary chance. Suddenly his racing thoughts came to a pause. Some closed spot in his mind seemed to open. He took down the telephone receiver and called a number excitedly.

"Hello, Rosemere Lumber Company!" he fairly shouted. "Tallman speaking! I want you to come over and begin those improvements we talked about. When? To-morrow morning!"

Then the electric-light company received a hurry call, and—last, but not least—the wholesalers who supplied the things that the villagers would buy throughout the winter. Then the Transcontinental got a bit of attention. Across the bottom of their letter, he wrote, "You go to hell!" signed his initials, and sealed the envelope. Then he stretched his arms, lit a pipe with the strength and poise of a big step taken, and went over to the post office with his reply. When this was done, he spied Corning, the real-estate agent, lolling outside his office, the inevitable cigar in the corner of his mouth.

"Hello, Corning!" said Victor, strolling over. "I hear business is fine."

"How's that?" said Corning, looking up.

"Oh, the sale to the Transcontinental," said Victor nonchalantly. Corning sat upright.

"Transcontinental! Who sold to the Transcontinental and what did they sell?" he demanded.

"Why, the lot opposite the depot," replied Victor blankly. "Didn't you do the trick?"

"Trick nothing!" exclaimed Corning, his cigar going out in his amazement. "That lot hasn't been sold. It belongs to me, and I ought to know. There hasn't been a piece of property changed hands here in more than——"

But Victor did not wait to hear how long. In great strides he was making for his shop and the correspondence from the grocery trust. Something was wrong somewhere. The lot they claimed to have bought was unsold! It was peculiar, to say the least! In a rush, he entered the shop, literally overturning Ed Scotch, who seemed to have forgotten the crullers and was philandering with the prunes. Ignoring the protests of his henchman and the importunities of three customers, he made for the letter files.

With feverish fingers, he drew out the blue papers and regarded them critically. But aside from their uncommon frankness, he could find no criticism of them. The letterheads next underwent a severe scrutiny, and before this was finished, Tallman gave a sharp exclamation and, gathering them up, repeated his violent progress through the shop, this time in the direction of the street door.

Main Street was luckily almost deserted in the late afternoon hour, or goodness knows what collisions might have occurred during Tallman's progress to the residence of Judge Cartwright. Once arrived at that mansion, he fairly flew up the tar path, past the faithful cast-iron dogs that guarded the steps, and gave a furious pull at the old-fashioned bell. Then he waited amid the evening stillness, inhaling the mingled odors of autumn jasmine and freshly baked cake. After a few mo-

ments, footsteps sounded within, and Esther herself, enveloped in a most becoming gingham apron, appeared at the door.

"Oh, it's you," she said. "Excuse my appearance. I've been making chocolate cake and had just got to the icing. Won't you come in?"

Reluctantly, but with his righteous anger cooling somewhat at sight of her, Victor did step into the cake-scented hall.

"I want to see your father," he said sternly.

"My father is in New Nevah," replied Esther.

"But he'll be home for supper?"

"Why, yes!" said she. "What on earth——"

"Then I'll wait," said Victor stiffly.

"Come into the parlor," said Esther, opening the door.

Unsmiling, he followed her and took the seat she indicated. Conversation languished.

"It's a lovely evening," Esther remarked.

"Very," said Tallman, closing the subject. There was another painful silence.

"If you can't be pleasanter, I'll go back to my cake," said Esther aggrievedly. "What in the world is the matter?"

Instinctively his hands strayed to the inner pocket which held the fateful correspondence. Her eyes followed the gesture.

"Why, Vic—what are those?" she exclaimed, reaching a tentative hand toward the tops of the blue papers. He drew away.

"Nothing," said he.

"Vic—tell me."

"It's business," said he shortly. "Something I want to see your father about."

"Business!" said Esther. Then she seized the blue letters of the Transcontinental and gave a little shriek.

"Oh, Vic," she cried, "so you have found out! But not before you gave the order to do the necessary improvements in your shop?"

"I have given the order," he admitted stiffly. "And I have only just discovered that it was your father—*your father*—who has been hounding me all these months—that he is in this damn corporation that has been trying to run me out of my own town—that has been trying to frighten me into——"

"Wait!" cried Esther. "Wait, Vic! My father doesn't know anything about those letters. He's just a director."

"But those letters signed K. C. Weston——"

"I am K. C. Weston," said Esther.

"You!" said Tallman dazedly.

Then Esther did a wonderful thing. She crossed the cake-perfumed parlor and put both arms around Victor's neck.

"I—I—stole the letterheads from dad's desk," she confessed, "and wrote the letters after my typewriting lesson. Will you forgive me, Vic dear? I wanted you to succeed so much and—and——"

But Tallman drowned the rest of the sentence with a kiss.

"Forgive you!" he whispered. "Of course I forgive you! And you'll have to forgive me, Esther. Next time you take a letter from Box 186, New Nevah, you'll get a message telling you to go to—to—well, an unpleasant place. But I don't mean it, Mr. Weston. Indeed I don't."





# More Super-Women

By Anice Terhune

Mary Anne Clark:

The Napoleonette of Finance.

Nay, never ask this week, fair lord,  
Where they are gone, nor yet this year,  
Except with this for an overword—  
But where are the snows of yesteryear?  
—*Ballad of Dead Ladies.*

MARY ANNE CLARK—whose name breathes smug respectability, if ever a name did—was at once a great woman and a great criminal. More than that, she was a genius. For she discovered a brand-new trade—and made a fortune in it. This is her claim to immortality in the Rogues' Gallery of super-women.

The circumstances of Mary Anne's birth are hazy. It is doubtful whether it occurred in London or Oxford—still more doubtful whether it occurred in wedlock. Her father's name was, presumably, Farquhar or Thompson. We know that she was born in the year 1776, and that her mother was married to both Thompson and Farquhar. Mary Anne herself claimed Farquhar as her parent. He said she was a liar. So take your choice.

While Mary Anne was still in her early teens, a young man named Day fell in love with her and sent her to school at West Ham, with a view to making her his wife. Here she was well taught, and proved herself a very clever pupil indeed—so much so that she quite outgrew her benefactor. She let herself become engaged to him and led him blindly along toward the altar.

When the wedding day actually came, she picked a violent quarrel with him and, refusing all his panic-stricken overtures of peace, jilted him. She had never had the slightest idea of marrying Day. She had wanted an education, and she had gained one in the cheapest way possible.

Her next suitor—she was about fifteen—was a pawnbroker of Golden Lane, whom she wheedled out of large sums of money. Mary Anne had an eye to the main chance from the very beginning, you see. She snatched an education from her first love, money from the second. Both acquisitions came in handy for her third adventure.

In her seventeenth year, she met Thomas Clark, who was a mason's apprentice. His father was a well-to-do builder, his uncle a wealthy alderman. To Mary Anne, he seemed a Prince Charming—or at least an excellent stepping-stone.

Early one morning, she and Clark walked out to St. Pancras' Church and were married. It was a bit sudden, but Mary Anne never bothered to consult people. The respective families of the bride and groom behaved very well. In fact, the groom's father generously came to the rescue and started his son in business.

The young couple began housekeeping in Charles Square. Later, they

moved to Golden Lane—dangerously near Mary's earlier flame, the pawnbroker. Clark proved to be drunken, violent, and of no account generally. Money was scarce—the pawnbroker was so near! Mary Anne was so young, and so very pretty, and so ill-treated by her husband, that it is small wonder some of the pawnbroker's money changed hands.

Mary Anne did her very best to play the game—she really did. She stood the racket for five years, during which hectic time she had two children. Then she ran away from her husband. To her credit be it said that she ran away all by herself.

According to her own story, she tried to find a home as governess in a quiet family in the country where she would be able to bring up her children. But somehow or somewhere in her wanderings she met "a gentleman"—she does not mention his name—who, as she describes him, "was both a barrister and a baronet."

Her unselfish aims were forgotten. Can you blame her? It is a mighty leap from pawnbroker to baronet. There was a luxurious interlude in a quiet Wiltshire town. But Mary Anne soon waxed bored. Quiet Wiltshire towns were not especially in her line. The barrister was more absorbed in his legal profession than in the profession of love. After a few months of Mary Anne's caprices, extravagance, and temper, he declined to complete the settlements of which, in the early days of his love, he had given her such fascinating hints.

After a screaming scene, the little lady—to the barrister's great relief—again ran away.

Within the next two years, she captivated two more baronets. The first was Sir John Milner. This affair hardly passed beyond a flirtation; but the second was more serious. Sir James Bondeville was her victim in this

case. All went well until Mary Anne presented him with a bill for two hundred pounds for a trifle of lace she had bought. Sir James took fright. And this time it was the man who ran away.

One night, at Vauxhall, Mary Anne met one James Stanley. There were no introductions. Both of them were handsome, young, elegantly dressed. They fell in love at first sight.

Off they pranced, on a brief honeymoon. Then came the shock. Each had taken the other for a person of distinction. Each now discovered the bitter truth—Mary Anne that Stanley was a card sharp, Stanley that Mary Anne lived by her fascinations. It was a dreadful awakening to them both. Yet they were genuinely fond of each other. They stayed together, at Bayswater, just as long as they could. Both were desperately hard up. Then Stanley had a run of abominable luck. There was nothing to do but part, which they did with perfect good will and many tears.

Mary Anne thereupon plunged into gayety at Vauxhall with all her might, determined to forget Stanley if possible.

She became the shining light at the dances, the toast of the supper rooms. Her beauty made her the rage. At Vauxhall, she met Alfred Dowler, a "blood" of the Stock Exchange. He took Mary Anne down to Brighton and loaded her with money and jewels. She flashed upon the fashionable world in glaring splendor. Dowler adored her and was her abject slave. But Mary Anne could not forget Stanley. Perhaps she did not try very hard. Anyway, he came down to Brighton at her secret request and helped her spend Mr. Dowler's guineas.

In the sea, Mary Anne was a mermaid—an eighteenth-century Annette Kellermann. She took her daily dip with wondrous grace, "diving, swimming, or floating on the surface of the

waves like a veritable Nereid." She was an irresistible magnet to all the young men who thronged Brighton.

Matters went on at breakneck pace for six months. Then Dowler's father put an end to the intrigue by cutting off his son's supplies.

This was the signal for Mary Anne to say good-by.

She dropped Dowler with great firmness, though gently withal.

"I will not tie your life to mine. I have only brought you unhappiness!" she wrote him.

So they parted, with great sorrow and forgiveness—on his part. Mary Anne, with a keen eye to the future, saw to it that he still remained very much in love.

We next hear of her in the character of *Portia* on the stage at the Haymarket Theater—placed there by the money of a wealthy suitor. She did everything to the unfortunate *Portia* except boil her in oil. The less we say about her acting, the better. Her career as a histrionic star had one virtue—it was brief. She did not go far, but she went fast.

Lord Barrymore and Charles Osman—whom she had known at Brighton—looked her up and showered her with attentions. Osman set her up in a house on Tavistock Place.

She was now fairly launched into the West End life of London, with a pocketful of money. She sent for her mother and sister to come and live with her.

Mary Anne was now twenty-eight. By quick stages, she had become an ice-cold woman of affairs, with wit, talent, and cultivation far above the average.

"She was a lady of charming manner," writes Captain Gronow, "and a brilliant talker."

In 1803, Mrs. Clark—shall we drop the "Mary Anne," now that she has taken on so much dignity? I think

she would prefer it—met Frederick, Duke of York, second son of King George III. He was drawn into her net almost at once. She had arrived. The climb from wife of a drunken apprentice to brevet spouse of the English throne's heir presumptive was a miracle of super-woman prowess.

Next year the duke gave her a house on Gloucester Place, Portman Square. Here she lived in semi-barbaric splendor. She kept a retinue of twenty servants, two butlers, and three cooks, and paid each of the cooks a guinea a day—unheard-of rates in that era of divinely low-waged servants. Altogether, wages and liveries cost her five thousand dollars a year, and the furnishings and appointments of the house totaled one hundred thousand dollars.

She had a service of plate that had once belonged to the Duc de Dino. The pier glasses in the reception room cost five hundred pounds. She drank out of wineglasses costing two guineas each. She had two coaches, ten horses, a villa at Brighton, and a second villa at Weybridge.

The duke promised her an allowance of five thousand dollars a month for household expenses, but his intentions and ideas were far larger than his means. He was a gambler and always getting into debt. Tradespeople were forever besieging the house, dunning for payment. Mrs. Clark, while rushing headlong into a whirlpool of extravagance, realized that something must be done.

Dowler now reappeared—this time in the character of her "man of business." He was always within call. Mrs. Clark was especially hard pressed for money. Dowler, his eye on the army commissariat—a rich field for plunder—stepped forward with a timely loan. Then he suggested that a whisper in the duke's ear would at once give him the coveted position of superintendent of supplies in the commissariat.

"Why *this* gentleman?" asked the duke in response to the "whisper."

"Because he will pay more liberally for the office than any one else," was Mrs. Clark's reply.

Dowler got the appointment.

To explain the brilliant line of business upon which Mrs. Clark now launched her talents, I must go, for a minute, into eighteen-century politics, customs, and so forth. I am sorry to bore you with it, but it will take but a minute or two.

Old George III., of unblest memory, had four sons. The only one of the four to leave a direct heir was the Duke of Kent, father of Queen Victoria. The eldest was the worthless George IV., who was at this time regent of the kingdom and waiting with blasphemous impatience for his lunatic father to die.

Two of the old king's uninspiring sons had been dedicated, respectively, to the navy and to the army. One of these, known as "the sailor prince," was to rule England, on his elder brother's death, as William IV. The other, Frederick, Duke of York, was commander in chief of Great Britain's armies.

Frederick was an excellent soldier—for a king's son—and carried his warlike propensities into the perpetual feud that raged between himself and his brothers. As to his political honesty and personal ethics—well, perhaps the kindest thing that can be said of them is that they shone with a pure flame by contrast with those of his elder brother, George.

In England, military commissions were, legally, things of barter and sale. More or less military education was necessary, of course, before a commission could be granted, but such commissions were sold, not given. It was an ancient custom, designed to keep such matters from falling into plebeian hands.

The selling of commissions, by the way, endured until 1871, when, amid a howl of protest from the conservatives, Mr. Gladstone abolished the purchase system.

And now let us get back to Mrs. Clark.

The Duke of York, as commander in chief of the army, was all powerful in the matter of granting commissions. Mrs. Clark was all powerful with the Duke of York. Combining business with pleasure, Frederick did much of his official work at Mrs. Clark's house. She acted, sometimes, as his secretary, which made her new financial rôle the easier to play.

It was a brilliant bit of finance that she devised, and in those days—in England, at least—it was new. Her lover was notoriously hard up as regarded ready cash. But he was boundlessly rich in commissions.

Mrs. Clark wanted money. Throngs of people wanted commissions. The duke had no money, and was glad to pay his debts of gallantry by scrawling his royal signature on war-office sheepskins. So everybody was happy—for a while.

Here is a table—said to be authentic—of Mrs. Clark's prices, as against those of the war department:

The latter charged thirteen thousand dollars for a major's commission; Mrs. Clark charged four thousand five hundred dollars. The regulation rate for a captaincy was seven thousand five hundred dollars; her bargain price was three thousand five hundred dollars. Lieutenants and ensigns were forced to pay the government two thousand seven hundred and fifty dollars, and two thousand dollars, respectively, for their commissions; Mrs. Clark's cut rates for these were two thousand dollars and one thousand dollars.

Says Waters:

"It is not surprising that certain of those who wanted commissions in the



army, either for themselves or for their friends, should have had recourse to Mrs. Clark, as soon as the report got abroad that the wares they were anxious to buy were retailed by her at a less expensive rate, and more expeditiously delivered, than by the constituted authorities.

"It is probable," Waters continues, "that the ease with which the Dowler transaction was brought about convinced Mrs. Clark that life would run easier were she to ask the duke for his good will—of which he seems to have been very generous—rather than for his money, for which he had so many uses.

"Thus, after the first stroke was played, the game went on apace. It was an age when the vast majority of the members of the legislature entered Parliament by gross bribery, purporting to recoup their expenditure, and perhaps a little in addition thereto, by selling their voices to this or that party leader."

During the uproar that followed on the exposure of all this, a claim was made that the duke was as innocent as a lamb, and that Mrs. Clark had forged his name to the commissions. I repeat this for what it is worth, which, I think, is nothing at all.

The true financial genius always hunts for by-products of his especial business. And these by-products sometimes outvalue the business itself. Mrs. Clark forestalled the pork-and-coal magnates by doing this very thing.

The richest by-product of commission selling was "recruit bounty." It was hard to get men for the army. In the navy, the lack was made up by the press gangs' work. In the army, enlistment was stimulated by the bounty system. The bounty, for each recruit, was thirteen guineas. Mrs. Clark, for two thousand five hundred dollars, put this industry into the hands of a Colonel French. Then she arranged that the

bounty should be raised from thirteen to sixteen guineas for each recruit, and that the extra three guineas should drop into her own capacious pocket.

This was a gold mine. French wanted a bigger share of it. Mrs. Clark refused to give it to him. French held up payments. Mrs. Clark complained to the duke. A fierce official reprimand from Frederick brought French squirmingly to his knees.

French was not the only man who sought to double cross this trusting little woman. Several others tried the same trick. Through the duke, she meted out such punishment to them as to make double crossing a perilous pastime. For example, Major Thomas Shaw promised her five thousand dollars for an appointment as barracks master. She insisted on an advance of two thousand five hundred dollars. Shaw paid it and got the job. Secure in his new position, he repudiated the debt and laughed at her pathetic efforts to secure the other two thousand five hundred dollars.

In tears, Mrs. Clark carried her story to the duke. Shaw was promptly placed on half pay. After this test case, and one or two more of the sort, word went around that it was unsafe to cheat Mrs. Clark. There was no more trouble about payments.

And now Mrs. Clark thriftily undertook to enlarge her flourishing business by taking a flyer in church benefices. Doctor O'Meara, a North-of-Ireland man, wanted a Protestant bishopric and a seat in the House of Lords. He brought his troubles to Mrs. Clark—along with two thousand five hundred dollars.

Mrs. Clark gave him a letter to the Duke of York. The duke wasted no time in putting the matter through. He secured for O'Meara the privilege of preaching before old King George III., who chanced to be enjoying a lucid interval in his mania.

"O'Meara," says a chronicler, "preached with much fervor and pathos. The king was closely attentive to his every word. Queen Charlotte, the princesses, and most of the congregation melted into tears. At the close of the service, the Duke of York tiptoed over to his father and whispered in his ear. His majesty started violently, exclaiming aloud:

"'Eh? Eh? What? What? What? Put a man with an 'O' before his name into an English bishopric? It won't do! Won't do! Won't do!'"

Which ended the transaction so far as O'Meara was concerned. Whether or not he got back his stake of two thousand five hundred dollars from his would-be benefactors, I don't know.

It is sad to record a conspiracy against the peace of mind and the prosperity of a hard-working woman, who was doing her poor best to advance herself in life. But presently all the world began to turn against the hapless Mrs. Clark.

Dowler, who had unostentatiously stuck close to his old sweetheart in the days of her prosperity, warned her again and again that she was playing a dangerous game. But if this excellent woman had a fault, it was lack of caution. And she paid no heed to the wise counsel.

Trouble set in. It set in from many quarters, and it had a long distance to go. Yet any one but a fool, or a luck drunkard, might have seen it coming. Mrs. Clark did not. You remember her husband, don't you? Enemies of hers now hunted him up and induced him to bring suit against the Duke of York for alienating his wife's affections. The case, of course, was sidetracked. The bereaved husband drank some of the profits of the sidetracking, and, in a hilarious condition, drifted around to Gloucester Place for a visit to his ex-wife.

The duke happened to be calling at

the same time and was much saddened by the family reunion. Two footmen trundled the impious intruder down the steps and into the street. Clark proceeded to collect an armful of cobblestones, and began to throw them through the front windows of the house, "committing this and other acts of violence," reports a scurrilous newspaper of the day, "to the no small alarm of the illustrious visitor."

This adventure seems to have begun Frederick's awakening from his long dream of love. This, and the notoriety it aroused, All London laughed. Frederick, unlike the rest of mankind, did not enjoy finding himself a laughingstock. His visits to Gloucester Place grew fewer, and Mrs. Clark, losing her head, proceeded to play a bad hand very badly. For she flew into fishwife rages, berating and threatening his grace.

This was the end. The duke sent Mr. Adam, his agent, to Mrs. Clark, telling her that the affair was finished, but that he would allow her two thousand dollars a year, "so long as she should live in such a manner as he approved."

The bereft siren raved and swore and wept—and ended by accepting the terms. There was nothing else for her to do.

Presently the duke fell behind in his payments. Mrs. Clark sent him a dun, coupling this with a threat to publish all his letters to her. She also sent a "touching" appeal to Frederick's elder brother, the prince regent. From the prince her only redress was the statement: "York seems to have behaved very shabbily." From the duke, she got nothing at all.

News of the break went abroad. A swarm of creditors swept down upon the Gloucester Place house. Mrs. Clark was cleaned out. Dead broke, she took meager lodgings over a bakeshop in Hempstead, Dowler paying the bills.

And now the duke's political enemies saw a splendid chance to make her hatred a weapon for Frederick's destruction. They found her only too willing. She told them everything she knew. She gave interesting facts—or fiction—as to army corruption, commission sales, commissariat frauds, and other peccadillos of the duke's. All this in return for a promise that her debts should be paid and that she should receive twenty-five thousand dollars down, two thousand dollars a year, and a furnished house.

Armed with Mrs. Clark's affidavit, the reformers started a parliamentary inquiry into the conduct of the duke. The inquiry was almost as sensational as was the famed trial of Warren Hastings. It was the social event of the year. The House of Commons was jammed with gorgeously attired women. All England smacked its lips over the royal scandal.

Around the duke rallied not only the whole army, but his political party as well. The greatest legal talent on earth was arrayed in an effort to smash one woman's testimony. And against its whirlwind attack, Mrs. Clark stood unshaken.

The cross-examination was bitter and brilliant beyond words. There were a million pitfalls laid for the witness. She fell into not one of the myriad cunningly laid traps.

That trial itself stamps Mary Anne Clark as a genius.

One of the cross-examiners—Spencer Perceval, chancellor of the exchequer—strayed into the paths of muckraking by an inquiry as to what Mrs. Clark knew of her husband's present mode of life. She answered:

"All that I know of my husband to-day is that God fashioned him in the semblance of a man."

"And pray, madame," sneered Perceval, "under whose protection are you now?"

Turning to the speaker of the House, she replied:

"I trust, sir, I am now under *your* protection."

Her evidence could not be shaken. Probably everybody there believed she was telling the truth. But the Duke of York was heir presumptive to the British throne. Also, he was commander in chief of the army, which was just then at death grips with Napoleon.

By a none-too-large margin, he was acquitted. But, under public pressure, he was forced to resign his position as commander in chief and to mend his entire mode of life. Under this same pressure, he dismissed the woman who had taken Mrs. Clark's place in his heart, arranged to pay his debts on the installment plan, went back to his forgiving wife, and, in short, became painfully reputable. So, after all, Mrs. Clark did not go wholly unavenged.

Of course the politicians who had lured Mrs. Clark into declaring war upon the duke did not make good on a single one of their many promises to her. Her only remaining asset was her collection of Frederick's love letters. These she proceeded to put into book form.

A publisher named Gillette printed an edition of eighteen thousand copies. They were never put on the market, for the king and the Prince of Wales and everybody else concerned raised a purse of fifty thousand dollars, which was paid to Mrs. Clark in return for the privilege of burning the eighteen thousand books. Ever a splendid business woman, Mary Anne also demanded—and received—an annuity of two thousand dollars for herself, and an extra two thousand dollars a year for each of her daughters by the duke.

It is pleasant to tell of the sunset of a well-spent life. On her annuity, Mary Anne Clark settled down to a

career of unbridled respectability. She knew when to stop.

Dabbling in literature and presiding at drearily smug tea parties, she drowsed along in happy uneventfulness until 1852, dying at the age of seventy-six in a treasured atmosphere of gentility.

She had outlived disrepute. She had outlived even the super-woman lure which had made her the most talked-of woman of her day. And she had sailed triumphantly and permanently, at last, into that haven of unalloyed bliss—middle-aged, Victorian respectability.

Happy—*thrice* happy—Mary Anne!

Next Month: Louise de Querouailles.



## FOR FRANCE

THIS poem is the first I write for France.

O Muse, if ever ways of mine were sweet  
For the light treading of your silvern feet,  
Come not in grief, but raveling a dance  
In praise of Paris! Aye, though she be sad,  
Footsore, and spent, and hollow-cheeked, with long  
Defending of the world, greet her with song  
And for her sake, that is the world's, be glad!

For we who loved her, cool along the Seine  
And golden warm in sunny Montparnasse,  
So drank of joy in her that never pain  
Or even death can lessen our delight.  
Therefore, I sing, though it may come to pass  
That we lie dead—for France!—before the night!

SALOMON DE LA SELVA.



# A Soldier of the Pavements

By Du Vernet Rabell

Author of "Don't Do It," "When Satan Was Sick," etc.



HE talked fluently and well, with a wealth of descriptive detail, as the young American generally talks if he talks at all. The group of khaki-clad boys pressed closer with each sentence; their expressions grew tenser, and the light brightened in their eyes, as they listened to the tall young soldier, whose Sam Brown belt proclaimed that he had seen foreign service.

"The captain was one of those suave, cool-looking Englishmen," he was saying. "He looked as if he ought to wear a topper and a monocle and have a bobby clear the way for him to cross Piccadilly. You know the kind I mean—you've seen 'em on the stage. Gee, fellows, there he was walking along that shell-torn ground, all crisscrossed with barbed wire, a perfect hell of fire all around him, and do you think he was hurrying any? He was not. He was just stepping along as if he was going somewhere definite, but had plenty of time to make it—like a gentleman walking over his country estate. Well—they got him. A shell dropped right in front of him, and he went West, taking about half a dozen of the boys with him."

Bert Alden surged forward, forced by the press behind him. He thrust his fists into his pockets, and his thin, sensitively curved lips stiffened excitedly.

"When the captain fell, the second lieutenant jumped forward—the first lieutenant got his before he was halfway over the trench—and he yelled to the boys behind him to hurry up. Everybody was crazy about the second lieutenant. His name was Sir Lionel Greaves, and he was a big bug back in England—but, at that, no bigger than he was out there. He used to go among the men and sing music-hall songs—and he had the greatest string of yarns—to cheer 'em up, you know. And the boys did set a great store by that. They were a cockney regiment, a fine lot, but besides being their officer, he was different. Oh, I can't explain it—it's this class business—but you'll get what I mean once you're over there. Now the men behind him yelled and ran forward at the double when they heard his voice. And he threw his little swagger stick up into the air, and began one of his songs—and it *was* a funny song. It made you laugh even in that hell. And when he stopped suddenly and dropped—they got him in the head; I could tell by the way he fell—those Tommies tore forward as if they just couldn't wait to get at the enemy's throat. But old Fritz was working his guns pretty lively that morning. He dropped a curtain of fire down in front of those fellows, and the deadliness of it made them pause.

And it's a funny thing about a pause like that—I've noticed it a half a dozen times—there's sure to be some man step out of the bunch—somebody you'd never think of, generally—and in a second the whole crowd is tearing along behind him. This chap's name was Fiddings. A little chap he was; nobody had ever noticed him much. He snatched up the lieutenant's little swagger stick and held it up.

"'Come on, you chaps!' he called, in his ladylike little voice that somehow rang clear just the same. 'Come on and get yourselves a new name! After to-day, let's be called the Fighting Fusiliers!'

"And you ought to have seen them go—over shell holes—over the dead—"

Bert Alden turned and worked his way out of the crowd. He went as blindly, as instinctively, as unreasoningly, as a setter pup loses his head at his first whiff of powder, as a woman faints at the sight of blood, as a man will sometimes run in the face of the guns. There those fellows stood, their eyes shining, their breath coming fast in their eager interest, while that tall, calm-eyed chap was talking like that! God—didn't they realize it? What was the matter with them? Those men he was talking about—that captain, that lieutenant, the rest of them—they were dead—dead! The fight surged over their bodies—their friends trampled on them, perhaps—but they—they were dead! Or worse—they were torn to pieces by shell—the blood pouring out— Oh, he couldn't even face the picture his mind conjured up for him!

He turned blindly out of the company street. He wanted to get away, not only out of the sound of the narrator's voice and the sight of the eager group about him; he wanted to get further than that—out of sight of the endless lines of company streets, with their long rows of brown tents, and the officers' quarters at the head. He

wanted to get away from the sound of the bugle, away from the sight of the flag itself!

Twenty minutes later, he had asked for and received leave and was striding away in the dust toward the railroad station. He passed his captain and saluted smartly. Corning looked admiringly after the tall, well-set-up young figure.

"He'll make a real soldier," he told the first lieutenant of C Company, who stood beside him. "None of your clay-faced, slouched-shouldered slacker breed there! He comes from fine stock, that boy does, and he shows it."

Bert, overhearing, smiled to himself—a queer, half-twisted grimace of the lips that was hardly a smile at all.

He tried to read through the first part of the three-hour trip to the city, but the printed page seemingly held little to interest him. He had no small talk and, being shy besides, didn't join in the conversation of the khaki-clad boys about him, all, like himself, bound for the city on leave. Mostly he sat in the corner of his seat, a frown between his young blue eyes, staring out at the flying landscape.

Arrived in New York, he walked across Forty-second Street to Broadway. He looked at the pictures in front of the theaters and movie houses, and stopped in front of a music store to listen to a wasp-waisted youth in a gray suit, with a belt up under his arm pits, bellow out some stirring patriotic air, in a voice like the bursting of a frozen water pipe.

"I'm going to-day—and do you care?" he finished poignantly.

"Not if you take your voice with you," a cool little voice remarked at Bert's elbow.

Bert looked down on the top of a red hat with bobbing red cherries covering the crown. The owner of the hat raised her head, and a pair of gray eyes met Bert's and crinkled sociably.



"Ever hear anything worse than that?" she demanded, and then went on to wonder, with a shake of her head that set the cherries to dancing wildly, "How do they get by with that—and live?"

Bert grinned in sympathy, and glanced with a sort of disinterested curiosity at the girl in her ultra-fashionable attire, while she swept his uniform with a swiftly appraising glance, and then waved her hand in the direction of the soloist, who was preparing for another burst of song.

"Why don't he go—instead of singing about it? He belongs in the army. He ought to be strong—with a voice like that. But"—here she shrugged her thin little shoulders—"I suppose they can't take 'em all in. The army is a classy organization, isn't it?" she asked, as Bert, beyond smiling vaguely, made no comment. "Isn't it?" she persisted.

"I don't know—I suppose so," Bert muttered, and turned away.

His eyes showed his surprise to find his small companion still by his side as he got out of the crowd and turned up Broadway.

"Yes." She nodded, noting his expression. "I've stood my limit, too."

She walked along beside him, swinging her bag on its bright red cord, her head turning this way and that and the cherries on her hat bobbing with every move.

"Nice day, isn't it?" she observed presently, with an uncertain sidelong glance. "First real warm spell we've had."

"Yes—and I sure did get good and sick of the snow and rain and slush. Gee, you sure do hand out some weather in this part of the country!" Bert declared disgustedly.

"It does get bad sometimes," the girl agreed. Then she smiled up at him, with the unconscious pertness of a little brown sparrow. "Where are you from?"

"The South."

"I thought so. You slur your r's sort of funny—not but I think it's real pretty," she added with a sort of hasty politeness.

They walked along in silence. Bert was wondering how and why this young person had attached herself to his side, and how long she was going to remain. But the young person, judging from the inconsequential little manner in which she tripped along on her high-heeled shoes, the way she hummed her casual song, was not wondering much about anything.

Bert came to the corner and paused.

"I turn here," he announced.

"Oh!" The girl seemed oddly disappointed.

Bert, hardly knowing why he did it, shrugged indifferently and walked on.

"Oh, I can go on another block or two, I guess."

"Are you in camp around here?" the girl asked after a moment. Then she went on with brisk cheeriness, "Tell me something about yourself. What's your regiment? Where do you go from here—and when? You know—every little thing. I *do* so like to hear about soldiering," she finished, in a burst of girlish enthusiasm.

"Why?" Bert asked incuriously.

"Why?" The girl looked up at him quickly. "Oh, I don't know. Isn't it the style to be khaki crazy?"

"I don't follow the style much."

Bert frowned. He had not come to New York to talk about soldiering; quite the contrary.

The girl's enthusiasm was evidently dampened for a moment or two, and she walked along in silence. But after a block she brightened again, and began to chatter. Bert didn't find much to say, but he found this little person trotting along beside him, making her gay comments on things and people, rather stimulating. And although he couldn't have told just why, he didn't

leave as he planned at each corner to do. He was lonely and depressed, for one reason, and he didn't welcome his own thoughts for company.

Finally the girl stopped and caught his sleeve.

"Have—have you had your dinner?" she asked him.

Bert shook his head.

"Neither have I. Let's go in here. I'll invite you." A flash of whimsical laughter lit her gray eyes. "We have to dine at a restaurant, because my cook left. This servant problem is fierce," and she laughed at her own humor as Bert followed her through the revolving doors.

She sat down opposite him and took off her gloves; she rolled them into a little ball and put them into her bag. She got out a small mirror and studied her odd little three-cornered face with a sort of impersonal interest. Then she tucked a stray lock of hair up under the red straw hat and leaned across the table.

"My name's Adele Merriman. What's yours?" she asked. "I suppose I had better know, seeing we're having dinner together. It makes talking easier—don't you think?"

"I suppose so." Bert gave their order, and as the waiter moved away, he added, "My name is Bert Alden."

Adele looked him over with frank admiration.

"Well, Bertie, take it from me, you make a fine-looking soldier."

Bert frowned. Why did this girl persist in talking about soldiering all the time?

"Soldiering isn't all the looks," he declared sullenly.

"Oh, I know that—it's fighting for right and freedom. Say, don't you think I read the papers?"

"Sure—you talk just like the newspapers and the women around the recruiting offices. They seem to think

all a man has to do is to fight for them!"

Adele considered this.

"Well, fighting's a real man's job, isn't it?" she asked.

Bert turned his head away, hiding his eyes.

"Fighting is all very well to talk about—but the doing of it is a whole lot different. And fighting isn't all, either. It's getting killed—or worse than that, being smashed up—and dying out there—"

"Oh, what do you want to look at that side for?" Adele put in, eyeing curiously his face, which had suddenly lost its color.

"I didn't use to."

"Well, why get habits that won't get you anything?"

"Oh, sure, it's easy to talk. But a couple of Pershing's men were in camp this morning—just come over on this Liberty Loan Campaign—and one of them was telling about a charge. My God, he saw his captain shot right down before his eyes—saw him fall—and a dozen other men killed—*killed* right there!" He shivered and pressed his hand over his eyes.

Adele was staring at him.

"Say, you act like a kid having nightmare. It's a good thing you didn't hear any of those tales before. You'd never have been in the army at all!"

"You're dead right, I wouldn't! When I volunteered, I couldn't hear anything but the bugle, and see the flag flying on the campus."

"Well, what else was there for you to see?" Adele leaned over the table and touched his hand consolingly. "Why, you crazy kid, I've talked to lots of boys, and they all say, once you get over there—right in it, you know, with the guns roaring and the—"

"Oh, quit it!" Bert burst out. Then his eyes focused straight ahead; his voice lowered and became suddenly cold and lifeless. "I'm not going," he said

slowly. "I'm not going. I've made up my mind to it—and I'm not going. Oh, I suppose I'm a fool to sit here and tell you about it," he went on wildly, "but what does it matter—" His voice trailed off, and his young eyes filled with visions that youth was never meant to look upon.

The girl across the table stared at him with horror-fascinated eyes.

"Say, are you going off your head? You want to quit pulling that stuff. It'll get you into trouble. And, besides—it's no way for you to talk. Why—why, it ain't *right*!"

As this sank into Bert's understanding, he laughed suddenly, and his laugh, as he looked at the pretty little painted face opposite his own, was filled with measureless contempt.

"That's great," he drawled, "coming from *you*!"

The girl winced, just a trifle. She recovered herself at once, but when she went on, her eyes had lost a little of their birdlike gayety.

"You know," she said, pushing her plate aside and trying to make the boy meet her eyes, "I want to talk to you. You need it. But— Oh, gee," she almost wailed, "I know I can't say what I want to! I don't know how!" She shook her head with wistful regret. "I wish I'd had some kind of an education. I never wished it before, specially, but I sure wish right now that I could sling the English! I'll bet I could make you see a thing or two. I'd talk to you—"

"Oh, talk isn't going to help me any! I tell you my mind is made up!"

"Oh, is it now? Why, you don't know what you're saying. You can't get your mind off those stories you've heard." She touched his sleeve. "And you know it's not only rotten to talk like that—it's just plain foolish!"

"Yes?" the boy drawled.

"Yes. Why, don't you know you couldn't get away? They'd nab you in

twenty-four hours. And then what? They'd stand you up against a stone wall, and you'd face a firing squad."

"Standing up against a stone wall is better than hanging on a barbed-wire for hours and hours, with both sides firing—"

"Honestly you're the most cheerful little dinner pal I ever had," Adele interrupted him, with a determinedly cheerful laugh. "If I'd known your idea of table talk, I'd have thought a bit before I asked you to dinner."

But Bert wasn't listening to her. Presently he brought his eyes back to the table, and for a long minute he studied the girl. Something he saw in her eyes stung him into angry speech.

"Well, you who are so keen on talking big, have you done anything special yourself?"

"Not—not much. I was going to once. I can sew like a streak, and my fingers are pretty light. I was going into that place down the street where they make the bandages, and I went and stood at the window, looking in a minute. The woman in charge, she was fine looking, with iron-gray hair, in a businesslike tailored suit under her white outfit. And she kept flying round telling everybody what to do, and consulting lists, and when she frowned once or twice—well, I sort of lost my nerve, I guess."

Bert was about to cut in sneeringly when something in the girl's face checked him.

"Then once I had ten dollars. I'd been saving for a hat—"

"A hat!" Bert laughed more in amusement than anything else.

"Well, I have to *have* smart hats in my business," Adele defended herself. "And as I was saying, I had ten dollars right there when a girl in a big car drew up at the curb and started to talk about the kids over on the other side—in Turkey. And say, she talked that ten dollars away from me as easy

as easy—but she didn't take it. Of course maybe she didn't see it. The whole crowd was fighting to give her money—and she had a nice face, and such sweet eyes, it didn't seem as if she'd hurt anybody's feeling. But somehow she never was looking when I held out my hand. And the car drove off, and there I was with my tenner in my hand."

"And you bought the hat?" Bert suggested curiously.

"Yes," Adele sighed, "but I never did get much enjoyment out of it. It didn't seem as if I had a right to it, somehow."

For a long moment there was silence between them. Then:

"So I had to find something else to do," she said after a moment, her lips laughing, although a shadow still lay across her gray eyes.

Bert appeared to lose interest. He glanced at the watch on his wrist and moved restlessly in his chair.

"I must be going, I guess."

Adele looked at him with a sort of anxious eagerness.

"Say—you were fooling, weren't you, about not going back? You're not really going to clear out? Oh, I know I was a fool to believe you—but you said it so seriously."

"I meant it seriously." Then his brow darkened. "And I don't need a girl like you to tell me where I get off, either. Oh, I don't mean that exactly, but can't you see it's my own business?"

"Not while you're wearing that uniform it's not. But"—and she made a hopeless little gesture—"I can see where I can't do anything. I suppose I had my nerve to think I could." Her eyes widened. "But you're right. A girl like me—I suppose if I was a—a good woman—I'm sort of pulling the sob stuff, but you get me—I could make you see. Oh," she exclaimed suddenly, her little hands clenching on the cloth,

"I wish to God I was good! Just for that I wish it!"

Then she steadied herself as the waiter approached with the check. Before Bert could divine her intention, she had taken it and, after scanning it quickly, reached into her bag.

"Here—what are you doing?" he cried. "Give me that check!"

She flung out a beseeching hand and shook her head.

"But I asked you—don't you remember? I always do it," she explained, with a kind of anxious breathlessness. "That's what I meant when I said I'd found something else to do. I take the boys out and feed 'em. It's all—"

"Well, you can't feed me. Pass over that check."

But the girl held it tightly.

"What do you want to act like that for? The other boys—"

"You must have met a fine lot if they let you pay."

"Well, they did—that is, the nicest ones. Of course they made a fuss at first—I could understand that—but, after, they let me do it. The real soldiers let me. They could see my point of view. The others couldn't see any but their own."

"Well," Bert sneered, "they're out of my class." He held out his hand with an imperative gesture.

Suddenly the girl dropped the check on the table. She pushed it toward him with a stiff-fingered gesture, as if she were touching something unclean.

"You said it," she declared slowly. "They were out of your class—way out. I wouldn't pay for your dinner—not in a thousand years! You're not a soldier—and, my God, you don't even understand why you ought to be!"

As Bert Alden swung on the train that would get him back to camp in time for taps, he turned and waved his hat at an eager little face that was pressed against the bars beyond the gate.

All the way back to camp, he talked with the boys about him, laughed at their jokes, sang their songs with them.

Just at the entrance of the company street, Corning, his captain, caught up with him and touched his arm.

"I want to talk to you, Alden," he said; then went on, with a sort of stern kindliness. "Bert, you're a boy from my home town, and it's up to me to look out for you. I saw you at the station to-night with a girl who—Well, Bert"—his tone lightened, and he tapped him on the chest—"those pretty little nymphs of the pavement, as the French have it, are easy to look at, but the sooner you cut them out, the sooner you get your stripe. Her kind of a girl never did a man any good."

He saluted, but Bert stopped him as he turned.

"'Her kind of a girl,'" he repeated. Then his voice flared. "Well, captain, I'm going to tell you something. It's a long tale, and the details aren't pretty, so I'll just let you in on the finish. That girl—and something the good Lord gave her and that nobody's been able to take away from her, no matter what else they've taken—is responsible for my being here to-night instead of disgracing the uniform I wear and the country that gave it to me." He lifted his chin, his young eyes alight. "She helped me find something—something I hope to God I had, but just didn't have in the right place. I found that in this big thing we're all in, we don't look on the ground, all shell torn and cut with the barbed wire, where our boys are dying. No—we keep our eyes on that flag flying above them, and think what they're dying for!"



### BEFORE DAWN

LAST night you stirred in your sleep as the night went through,  
And I knew you were thinking far off, invisible things,  
And my heart cried out with the ache of its love for you,  
Till I longed to be free of its spell and the pain that it brings.

There came to me out of the night the hum of the city street,  
The honking of horns and the rattle of passing cars,  
And ever the sound of restless and hurrying feet,  
But my heart was alone and crying under the stars.

My heart was alone, though you that I love the best  
Crept into my arms, and your slumber grew peaceful again,  
So you smiled in your sleep, and your head drooped over my breast,  
But I lay awake, and my heart was heavy with pain.

ELINOR CHIPP.



# The Pride of Galatea

By Elizabeth Newport Hepburn

Author of "The Greater Drama," "The Hidden Force," etc.

## PART II.

### CHAPTER V.

ON the stage, tense moments in any play, however strong and finely handled in the writing, usually descend to the melodramatic. Yet in real life, such moments of high emotional tension are extraordinarily quiet. Anglo-Saxon men and women rarely vociferate their love, hate, anger, sorrow, or surprise.

Certainly the Danas' arrival that afternoon, and the ensuing hour, were marked essentially as sheer drama, to me, yet no situation could have been more discreet and peaceful, less of a play to the gallery. Page and her husband merely walked into the room. I did a little casual explaining, Rose abetting me with a charming grace. An outsider would quite possibly have perceived no tension and no drama of any kind. Yet the reversal of rôles by those two women was amazing.

Hitherto, in the presence of Page Dana, I had seen Rose, shy, sulky, consciously at a disadvantage, while Page, gracious and charming, had starred, perhaps unconsciously, yet quite inevitably, always in the spotlight.

To-day Rose showed perfect equanimity. In some mysterious way, she seemed for the first time mature, despite her allure of youth. And Page Dana's astonishment, unworded, yet written that first instant on her frank face, in her arrested gesture, was the bona-fide article. She had come to see my studio, and she had actually found a flawless drawing-room with Rose as

mistress, and Rose, by the alchemy of ambition and rapid-fire education, had blossomed overnight into a woman of taste and charm, a woman of the world.

I explained the situation as lightly as I could, and Rose paid tribute to me with the gayest grace.

"Mr. Payne is a wonder! He's just picked me up and lifted me out of the dreadful rut I was in. He's taken my crudeness in his hands, shown me my blindness and blunders, taught me how to see. And learning to see has been a splendid adventure!"

Jim Dana was staring at the girl in a way that was all but rude. Apparently he had never really seen her before.

"Gad, you're amazing, Mrs. Blake. I've never before seen a woman's beauty and her environment fused and blended as you've managed it here. You're a witch, and I'm wasting no admiration on Gregory. No man on earth could have done what you've done!"

From Jim Dana, blind, brilliant, stupid Jim, this meant sheer triumph. I couldn't help seeing his wife's face, pale, controlled, yet strangely hurt. Yet I understood Jim. He was used to Page, used to living in the atmosphere that she created about her. Hitherto, Rose had been to him a nonentity. She was that no longer.

We wandered about the place. It was Jim, not Page, who showed an interest in the details of furniture, hangings, rugs, pictures, an interest such



as I had never seen him display before. Page just trailed along, saying now and then an appreciative word. Both of them were watching Rose, her eager, vivid face, her quick movements. I knew that the beauty of her gown was not lost upon them. In its way, it was as much of a triumph as the place itself.

Then I realized that Jim was appreciating the loveliness of her nymphlike shoulders, visible through the filmy laces of her frock, that to Jim had come a personal revelation of her beauty and magnetism. I had never seen him look at a woman in this way before. I had a stinging sense of blind jealousy. He was discovering my Rose, was conscious of its unique perfume.

Under the veneer of custom and molded propriety, I suffered miserably and told myself that I had no right to suffer. This was the wife of another man. Why under heaven should I resent Jim Dana's looking at her as any man may look at any woman?

We had tea after the tour of inspection, in delicate cups which I had not yet seen, beautiful things from some Oriental shop, not the crude stuff those canny peoples sell to cruder Americans, but the real artistic product, made for those who understand. Again my very success with this queer young pupil irritated me.

Presently Jim and Rose fell into talk together, going over to look at the tapestry Rose had bought at the sale. Page and I continued to talk platitudes, sipping our cold tea, both of us trying not to watch those two across the large room. I avoided Page's glance until I found her avoiding mine. She said at last, smiling, yet in her voice no hint of its characteristic lazy humor:

"You've done a fine thing, Greg, and she's all you think her—really an amazing person with all sorts of possibilities—social, personal. We've been blind."

I looked at her, and I suppose my

eyes said more than I intended, for she touched my hand, laughing softly, not a gay laugh.

"Poor old Greg! Yet it happens to even the most carefree bachelors, every decade or so!"

There was a time that she remembered and that I remembered, but now my eyes returned to those two standing under the tapestry—Mrs. Blake tall, slight, exquisitely girlish, yet with that new flowering about her, and Jim leaning a little forward, listening to her quick, clipped words, studying her with an intentness he usually reserved for his work.

Under her breath, Page exhaled a tiny sigh, and the corners of her mouth curled. She patted her own broadcloth knee.

"Poor old Page Dana! Getting on, getting a little gray, while across the room is the incarnate spirit of youth, daring, beauty. Greg, already she's *got you*. She can have Jim for the crooking of her finger, whether he knows it or not. And I am nearly forty years old!"

I affected to laugh at her, said something banal, complimentary, but I was secretly restless. After all, as yet the climax evaded us. I was waiting—we were all waiting, save Jim—for Blake himself, Rose's absent possessor.

Human nature is essentially illogical and as whimsical as blind chance.

Here were Page and I anticipating Blake's arrival as one looks for a deliverer. I was saying to myself:

"When he comes, I'll wake up. After all, she's his wife, and I've got to crawl out of a dangerous situation, cure myself of an infatuation."

And Page, as she confessed to me afterward, was telling herself:

"When he comes, the bubble will burst, the iridescent wonder of the girl's charm will shatter to bits, and Jim will remember that I'm in the

world. Then this black mood will seem just a nightmare that is past."

However, Rose Blake was really a very clever woman, as I trust I have indicated. We were all looking at some interesting etchings she had picked up when the maid entered the room and spoke quietly to Rose, who as quietly excused herself for a moment.

Ten minutes later, when we were beginning to wonder, she came back—Blake with her. And then the atmosphere of the room was certainly snapping with some unseen, unrecognized force.

Blake was a man plain almost to the point of homeliness, sensitive, as a rule curiously lacking in self-assertion. He was one of those rare people who possess too little rather than too much egotism. But there had always been a dignity about his very simplicity, a certain reserve beneath his frankness.

That afternoon the dignity was uppermost, and even beside Rose's beauty and new distinction, he did not cut quite the insignificant figure I should have liked to see. He greeted us pleasantly, and he must have been prepared for the apartment, for he said very little. But his face was eloquent as he studied this background that Rose had made for her own loveliness. I saw that none of my work was lost on this "purbblind husband." I saw, too, that all three of us were under the spell of Rose Blake exactly as if she were starring on a real stage.

After the first handshake and greeting all round, Blake hardly glanced at Page. His attention was centered on this altered Rose. In his eyes was almost the identical astonished recognition I had seen in Jim's eyes. For a brief hour we were three men concentrated wholly upon one woman. Page might have been a portrait on the wall, in spite of the outward amenities which we tried to preserve.

To me Blake was courteous, thank-

ing me with a little smile for what Rose called my "wonderfulness," but with a certain impersonal reserve in his manner for which I was grateful. I was remembering the kiss Rose had given me—yes, given me—and I wanted no personal warmth existing between her husband and myself. I had a sense of keen anticipation, and of triumph; also a certain compassion for this poor fool whose wife was going to love me, Gregory Payne.

While Blake and the Danas were talking in the hall, I managed to get a word apart with Rose. For an instant I clasped her hands again.

"To-morrow, Rose," I said.

Lovely, flushed, and smiling, she looked at me, triumphant as young Diana, conscious of her new sovereignty. And she said:

"Oh, Gregory, it's been wonderful!"

"You are wonderful," I said, "and I love you!"

The color dyed her cheeks. We heard the door slam upon the departing Danas, and I repeated once more:

"To-morrow!"

Then Blake returned, and I said good-by to them both.

## CHAPTER VI.

That next morning, I went to see Rose and was told by the maid that she was out. I tried to get her on the telephone, failed in this, tried again, and failed again. Eleven times during the next few days I tried to see or speak to Rose, and when I did see her at last, it was in the evening, with Blake present. Then I met them both at the Danas', and once all of them came to my studio for tea, but I got no moment with her alone.

Then I began writing to her, not discreet, friendly letters, but notes dashed off in hot anger, without beginning or end. No answer reached me beyond a formal little note thanking me for

some flowers I had sent her earlier, and then weeks passed without my hearing from her. Finally, through Page Dana, I heard that Blake had taken a vacation and that the two had gone abroad for several months. At last a letter came for me, postmarked in Venice:

DEAR MR. PAYNE: After all, Ruskin does help, when it comes to "stones." Venice seemed at first quite to belong to him, and I've read things about him that make me think he must have been a pretty nice old frump, after all.

Yet you help so much more—the things you taught me and made me see for myself. Everywhere I go in this strange, beautiful old world, I find myself saying little prayers of thanksgiving to you for teaching me to realize color and form, to relate things I once should have found a world apart, like this blue Italian sky and a wonderful window I found in a queer old church the other day. If I'd come here a year earlier, without those weeks of wandering through New York with you through shops and galleries, I should have missed most of the beauty that now seems to fill space.

As for your anger, well, it seems unreal, off here. And yet perhaps you've a right to be angry. I'm not sure about it. But some day we'll talk things out. And always, whatever happens to any of us, I shall go on being your grateful

GALATEA.

Nearly a year after that tea party in Rose's new drawing-room, I began to face squarely several facts which I had been trying to ignore—first, that I had failed to win the one woman I loved; secondly, that my work had gone stale; and finally, that I was drinking a great deal more than was good for me. Then I braced up, refused two commissions that I was afraid to accept at this stage, and worked six weeks in life class, trying to recover the ground I had lost.

Then one morning, when I had begun to regain my self-respect and when work once more seemed good, I gave my model a holiday and chalked in a background to a pastel study.

As I worked, there came a knock upon my door. I answered, and the door opened to admit—Rose Blake.

I got to my feet, feeling myself in a sort of dream, but that whimsical, impish little smile I remembered lighted her face and made her seem warmly human.

"Won't you ask me to sit down?" she said.

I dragged forward a chair, wiped my hands on a paint rag—which did not improve matters—and stared at her almost resentfully.

"I'm wondering why you are here—at last!" I said.

"And I'm going to tell you," she returned sweetly.

It was late fall, cold outside, but the room was warm, and Rose slipped from her furs and opened the collar of her coat. Her bare throat, her bright hair ruffled by the wind, her unlined, petal-soft skin—all these were even lovelier than I remembered them. Beneath my eyes her color burned, yet despite the old grace and slimmness, there was something changed, some new element in her beauty. What it was I could not determine, but she faced me with the bright courage I knew and had tested many times.

"Please sit down, Gregory Payne. I want to tell you some of the things you ought to know."

I obeyed, and she leaned back in her chair with a little satisfied sigh.

"You see, Gregory, all those weeks you were so good to me and I was so mad to learn that I forgot other things, important things."

"What, for instance?"

"That we were young, a man and a woman, that people have sometimes called me beautiful and have always called Gregory Payne fascinating, and that I was in a doubtful position—angry with my husband, separated from him at the time, jealous of his interest in another woman. Everything is plain enough now, the danger for us both, but then— Why, truly, Greg, you surprised me, that last day."

"Rose, you kissed me back!" I accused, caddishly enough, for I found that, despite all the months between, I was still angry. I felt that she had used me, led me on, and then dropped me when she had no further need of my services. And I added: "You know that is why I had a right to see you, to expect some sort of an explanation. You simply evaded the issue by running away—and it wasn't like you, like the Rose I had known."

She met my eyes with her old candid gaze and her cheeks burned.

"I know, Greg. That's why I'm here now."

"To explain a kiss—after a year?" I challenged.

There was a proud humility in her poised head and half-tremulous smile.

"Yes, Greg. And it's hard to explain—in a way, impossible. Yet I had to wait because— Oh, as I told you then, I wasn't wicked! I was only terribly excited!"

There are moments when any man resents a woman's effort to ring in the moral aspect of an emotional situation. I spoke impatiently:

"If you'd been an ignorant child, I should have blamed myself, Rose. But you were—well, despite your youth, you were married. As things were, you—"

"Didn't play the game," she finished for me. "Yes, I see that now. In fact, I saw it then. But has it occurred to you that, in punishing you, I was also punishing myself?"

I moved toward her, but she put out her hand, waving me back with a little peremptory air.

"No, hear me out! This chance may never come again. Please wait!"

She leaned forward, her chin in her cupped hands, speaking quietly, choosing her words with care:

"Of course I was a little fool. What I expected of you, of myself, and afterward of David was preposterous. But,

you see, in the beginning I was full of just one thing—the jealous ache to understand, to learn, to equal your Page Dana in David's eyes, your eyes. I even found that I wanted that big, indifferent husband of hers at least to *see* me!"

I smiled rather grimly.

"Well, you succeeded—with us all. You more than avenged yourself on Page. None of us is likely ever to forget that afternoon."

That young, provocative smile curved her lips for a moment, and again I felt the old surging anger. I said:

"None of which explains—your kiss! And this year of silence!"

It was sheer brutality, but I had to be at least verbally brutal. She had marked my life deeply, and she understood my mood. In fact, I have since come to think that this Rose woman understands many things hidden from the daughters of men—especially concerning the nature of men's sons.

The impish look vanished, and she was just her old honest self.

"Gregory Payne, the explanation is that you swept me off my feet, made me care for you, made me want your kisses. That's why I had to go away and keep away!"

"You didn't trust me!" I said.

"I didn't trust myself," she parried.

"But now—" and again I wanted to fling aside futile words and take her in my arms. But she replied steadily:

"Now we may both be trusted."

She said it with a quick, flashing smile, tears on her lashes. I dropped back into my chair, and she went on swiftly:

"All those weeks, I was possessed by one idea—to absorb all you knew, learn all you could teach. And you were wonderful, Greg! A dozen times I had reason to appreciate your chivalry, your care for me. And you captured my dream for me, the dream I could never have realized by myself. You trained

my taste, altered the very current of my thoughts, gave me a fresh, splendid sense of the bigness and beauty of life. I saw you days and read the books you told me about evenings. Is it surprising that, after three months, I forgot David for a moment in that place you and I had made—the David who had fallen under another woman's spell and hurt my pride as nothing had ever hurt me before? Could I have helped losing my head—for a moment? I wasn't wise or sheltered or experienced, Greg!"

I said nothing, and she swept on impetuously:

"When you left that afternoon, I meant to see you the next morning, *meant I don't know what—perhaps everything!* Then David and I sat up half the night and talked things out, our part in it all. For the first time, we seemed really to understand each other, to get together mentally. He told me how he had felt about Page, about her place, about the beauty he had missed always and wanted and not known how to get. And he saw me changed, with a new vision—your vision. Even new words—your words, too! We piqued each other's interest. But we didn't go deep into the emotional side of things then. There was so much else new and strange. He went back to the old apartment that evening. I told him I wanted to think things out, wasn't ready for him. And all night I lay awake, thinking of him and myself and you."

She sat very straight, staring into the fire. Her whole personality seemed fused in this effort to make me see with her eyes. I, too, began to watch the fire.

"Greg, I wanted to give in to you, wanted it horribly! And I knew—Well, David isn't small—he isn't the kind of man that wants to keep a woman against her will. Even before he told me, I knew that I was curiously

free to choose, in spite of my marriage. Yet when I remembered the way you looked at me—all your faces around the tea table that afternoon—I *saw I just couldn't throw it all away!*"

"Throw what away?" I said stupidly.

"You meant—divorce for me and David, didn't you, Greg?"

"Of course. And I meant to marry you the first possible moment."

She nodded.

"I knew. And I knew David, too. But, if we had done it, then everything I'd worked for would have been lost—in a quicksand."

"What on earth are you driving at?" I complained.

"This: I'd tried to make something of myself, tried to grow, to develop. I'd been stunted, stupid, until you taught me, opened my eyes and my mind. But, Greg, if I'd broken my marriage and gone to you, all my life I should have believed, and you would have believed, too, that not ambition to know and grow, but sheer selfish passion had possessed me all those weeks. Don't you see?"

I was conscious that perhaps I need not hate Blake quite so bitterly.

"Do you mean that your husband had nothing to do with your decision?"

"Not at first—at least not in the way you mean. It was a long time before I knew where I stood. I had to talk it out with David, tell him of you—"

"Tell him of me?"

My tone brought her eyes jumping from the fire to my face. She leaned forward, took my hand, and gripped it, hard.

"Gregory, I've come now because all this is *past!* Because I want you now not as a—lover, but as my friend! Always my friend! Because now I'm David's wife as I never was until—until you brought us together!"

I let fall one short, angry word, but she held me tightly.

"You did, Greg! You helped me to

grow up, showed me a world so splendid, so limitless that I wanted to count in it as I'd never counted before."

"And what did David say?"

A whimsical smile curved her lips.

"He swore abominably at first—exactly as you would have sworn. In that moment, I forgave Page Dana, stopped hating her forever. You see, he did love me best. He even forgot her."

"And then?"

"Then he begged my pardon and went over to the window and stood there for a long time with his back to me. At last he turned around and told me that if I wanted to divorce him and marry you, he wouldn't stand in my way."

"And you?"

"Gregory, he was grim and curt. And you had appealed to me in a hundred ways—with little tricks of speech and manner, with that easy charm which must fascinate any woman, with all that you knew, and with the talent I had grown so proud of. You were younger, handsomer, with every advantage of education, social experience. And I trusted your honor, too."

"Why, then——"

"Greg, he was so big, so square, so determined to do the right thing if it killed him! And he needed me! After all, he and I were the same sort. It was for David that I had worked—to win him back. And now that I had won, now that we both wanted the thing you had shown me how to get— Don't you see?"

I saw. But not why she had come now.

"Because—oh, Greg, I wanted everything square and aboveboard—especially now! David understands, trusts me, feels sure of me. I wanted you to understand, too—wanted to feel that you would respect David's wife—would forget——"

This was beyond the mark, and I said so.

"I can't forget, Rose, not so long as I breathe! The kiss you gave me was the kiss of the truest woman I have ever known. I do respect David's wife from the bottom of my soul. There's not one thing for you to—regret."

She looked at me a long minute with shining eyes, a look no man could forget. Then she slipped into her furs and stole away. On the stair she looked back. Her young face glowed,

All this happened more than five years ago. Since has come the war, upsetting our traditions and convictions and values, changing our outlook on life. In 1916, I stopped painting portraits and went to France to work for the Allies—camouflage, and I was good at it until a Boche bullet caught me and I was ordered home.

Limping up the Avenue that first day after my return, I saw Rose Blake, lovelier than ever, yet, it seemed to me, a little pale.

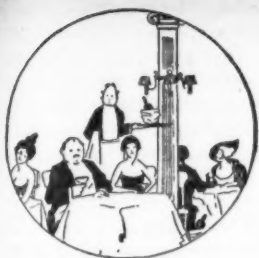
Then I saw that the straight, trim chap in khaki with Rose was David himself, an altered, rejuvenated David. He had been training at Plattsburg and might sail any day. As we shook hands, his grip felt firm and hard, and he said almost gayly:

"Payne, I'm damned glad you're back, and to stay! With you in New York, I'll feel better about Rose and the boys."

"Yes," said Rose briefly. "You'll help, Greg."

She walked between us, erect as any soldier boy, looking from David to me, with my cane, then back to David. If for an instant her eyes were dim, she held her head high. The three of us walked on up the Avenue, under the gleaming, fluttering Allied flags. For the second time, I caught that look of luminous pride in her eyes—pride in her own men-folk. Some women wear it like a decoration.





# Temperament

By Louise Winter



SHE was a writer of clever short stories, and out of a series was evolved a play. He was a novelist, a psycho-analyst, and his volumes ran to many pages. She had a vogue, and the solid reading public looked to him for a book every other year. And they both did well, according to their bankers.

She came to Washington while her play was still on the boards. She was lionized, and eventually they met. She was a silver blonde, with a skin as fine and as pink and white as a baby's. She had deep blue eyes, and her mouth was soft and curved. She confessed to thirty-three, and she did not look older. He was frankly forty, with a splendid head of dark-brown hair, almost black eyes, and an aggressive nose—a handsome, well-set-up man who did not permit his sedentary habits to encroach upon his waist line.

"Mrs. Pembroke, allow me to present Mr. Austin Beard. I know you two must have a good deal in common."

The hostess beamed at them as if she had accomplished a life work in bringing them together, and the two authors stared at each other like antagonists stripped for the fray.

What had they in common? Merely an ability to produce money-making literature, or some sympathetic strain that would draw them close?

Beard knew that Lisa Pembroke was a widow. Somehow he had not fancied that she would look as young as her

photographs. He admired the way she was dressed, for he was extremely careful about his own personal appearance, and he resented the slovenly habits with which a few had damned the whole race of professionals.

Lisa Pembroke welcomed him with the smile she gave to interviewers. She called it putting her best smile forward. It was appealing, the "I-hope-you-will-like-me - though-I-really-don't-know-why-you-should" smile that rarely fails to attain its object.

"Isn't it strange that people persist in believing literature a common heritage?" she said, discarding the usual platitudes. "Fancy placing Tagore next to Elinor Glyn at dinner merely because they both write!"

"It requires an effort to imagine the mind of a hostess who could do it," he returned. If she were going to be frivolous, he would show her that he did not always think in two volumes.

"And now tell me something? Do you really believe that authors are mentally sexless—that, to achieve an important piece of fiction, we must be able to get the masculine as well as the feminine point of view?"

This had been the subject of his last novel, and it gave him a secret thrill to realize that this popular short-story writer was familiar with his work.

"Yes. Don't you?"

She shook her head.

"No! I realize that my viewpoint is absurdly feminine. My men are pre-

posterous creatures, and I should despise them in real life, but my public seems to like the exaggerated types, and I go on creating them." She smiled again, as if she were letting him into a carefully guarded secret, and Beard, who prided himself on his intimate knowledge of the opposite sex, returned her smile indulgently.

This was not the place for a discussion of psychology, and so he wondered audibly if she would give him the opportunity to resume the conversation at greater length. She said it would be most interesting, and he offered her tea, the next afternoon, at the Shoreham.

Lisa Pembroke's days in Washington were filled, but it pleased her to disappoint a senator's wife and to go to tea with Austin Beard.

At the tea table, she placed herself mentally at his feet, as if she knew the ephemeral quality of her work and the solid endurance of his. Their talk ran sketchily over a dozen subjects, none of which could be gone into deeply enough to allow them to feel that the last word had been said and when, with real reluctance, Lisa announced that she must be getting on, Beard begged for another intimate hour as eagerly as if he were a youth and she were a *débutante*. But she could not spare him another afternoon, and Washington has its code and he could not venture to ask for an evening. They met, however, at various places with sufficient frequency for him to say at their last meeting:

"If I'm in New York this spring, may I look you up?"

"Do. I live at the Studios, and there I'm a working person and by no means the butterfly I've appeared to be here."

"I trust I shan't find you very different." It was an attempt to flatter and Lisa appreciated it.

She went back to New York and spent six weeks on a new play, also

evolved from some of her stories. Then one morning she awoke and realized that spring had overtaken the city. She went out and bought a large bunch of jonquils; she ordered some new frocks for herself and a complete chintz outfit for the studio. Incidentally, she began to wonder when Austin Beard would come to New York.

One afternoon, when she had sent away in disgust the man who was whipping her play into shape, Beard's name was announced over the house telephone.

"Send him up!"

She had answered the telephone herself and now, womanlike, she glanced into the mirror and decided that she looked like a fright. She called directions to her maid as she rushed into her bedroom, tore off her smock, and got herself into a new white frock.

Ten minutes later, cool and dainty, she walked into the studio to greet her guest.

Like herself, he had felt spring in the air, and he was wearing gray trousers with his black cutaway, and in his buttonhole was a sprig of *arbutus*.

The studio was a magnificent room, with a gallery running around two sides. The north window was draped with a superb piece of tapestry, for she did not need its light, and the furniture was antique mahogany which she had picked up in Cuba. But large as the room was, it did not dwarf Austin Beard.

Lisa was interested. Her studio made so many men appear little, mentally as well as physically, that it was a novel experience to have a stranger come into it and be at ease. She had a small boudoir off, where she generally received the men who came to call.

Beard resumed the conversation where they had left it the first time they had been alone together, and it flattered her to find that he had preserved the memory of her words with

such exactness. She did not learn until much later that he had a mind for detail.

She rather liked these discussions that left her unconvinced, that allowed her to argue cleverly and remain of the same opinion. Very few men cared to carry on a discussion purely for its own sake.

He came again and again. He said he had come over to see his publishers, but his business occupied only a fraction of the day, and he had many hours to place at her disposal.

Lisa had not escaped the attention of fortune hunters, but although she was charming, the majority of disinterested men did not pursue her with acquaintance. Perhaps they were afraid of her, for she was undeniably clever, but whatever the reason, while her dinner partners were fascinated by her witty discourse, they rarely sought her in her own home.

Austin Beard made quite as much money as she did, and therefore his evident pleasure in her society was not dictated by a mercenary outlook. He was young enough to be worth attracting, and he had a reputation for solidity all over the United States.

It was not long before Lisa detected the note of sentiment creeping in. So far, with his Washington conventions uppermost, he had not asked her to dine with him, but he had had dinner once or twice at her apartment, always, however, in the company of some cousins whom she could call upon for this purpose.

Her play ran against a snag, but, puffed up by the success of her first dramatic offering, she was unwilling to take professional advice in casting her second effort.

One afternoon she confided her difficulties to Beard, and he, after thinking deeply, suggested a simple way out of the tangle.

"Why place the second act in Halli-

day's rooms? Why not at the country club? It would be natural for Muriel to meet Halliday there."

Lisa sighed with relief.

"Strange I never thought of that!"

He smiled and forbore to utter the platitude about two heads.

The next day she telephoned him.

"I can't keep my engagement for tea. I must work. Thanks to you, the play is going swimmingly, and I dare not let anything deflect my attention until the act is finished."

"When will that be?"

"I shall work until six."

"And then?"

"I shall dine and go at it again."

"Shan't I see you at all?" There was actual dismay in his voice.

"I'm afraid not to-day."

"Mrs. Pembroke"—he had a bold idea—"would you—would you dine with me? Perhaps talking it over again with an unprejudiced outsider may send you back to your work with fresh ardor. I'll let you go immediately after dinner."

Lisa felt suddenly as if she wanted to see Austin Beard, as if she would miss it if she did not see him; and a little dinner *à deux* would not distract her. On the contrary, he had helped her once and he might again.

So she dined with him. She chose Voisin's, and in its quiet atmosphere she relaxed. They dined at eight, and at ten they were leisurely finishing their coffee. Lisa lit a cigarette and blew the smoke from her red lips. She was not a faddist; she smoked because it stimulated her.

Beard watched her, and it came to him that this woman filled a niche in his life that he had not been conscious, up till now, needed filling. Many women had shown him that they were anxious to share his prospects, but he had feared their influence upon his career. The purely domestic type would irritate him; the purely social

woman would demand too much; and the general run of female authors inspired him with horror. Lisa had none of the unpleasant attributes of the woman who writes. Her home was delightful, and she had a number of little talents that did not encroach upon her big talent.

He had thought his interest in her mental; now, as he watched the smoke issuing from between her red lips, he wanted to kiss her. It was extraordinary! He not only wanted to kiss her, but he wanted to take her in his arms, to crush her to him, to pass his hands over her hair, to rest his cheek against hers. He was a psycho-analyst, and he knew at once what had happened to him. He was in love. He had written about this phase of a man's emotions too many times not to recognize the state at once. When he had acknowledged it to himself, he wanted to acknowledge it to her, and he saw no reason why he should delay his proposal.

Presently Lisa announced that her time was up, and he made no protest. When they reached her apartment, however, he ignored her intention of bidding him good night in the hall below and followed her upstairs.

"You were good enough, the other day, to say I helped you. Now I want to ask something in return," he said quietly.

Lisa noted the undercurrent of excitement in his manner and wondered if she could put off what was coming until she had finished her play.

But Austin Beard would not be deterred from his purpose. Discarding the ponderous approaches he was so given to in his novels, he said simply: "Lisa, I love you. Will you marry me?"

Her first marriage had been a mistake. It had been the outcome of a boy-and-girl romance, and long before her husband's death, they had lived

apart. She had secretly longed for an absorbing love to develop her emotional side, but until she had met Beard, few worth-while men had come into her life. She had no thought of refusing him, for she had long since decided that their work was a common bond.

Love making occasioned a hiatus in play writing, and the second act was put aside while Lisa and Beard made plans for an early wedding. If they married at once and took a house out of town for the summer, she could get her play ready for an autumn production, and he could begin his new novel.

They were in love, but they were mature people, and their careers were important. The engagement elicited some wonder among Lisa's friends, but on the whole it received approval.

They were married in June, and they took a charming house on the Sound. After a brief honeymoon, they settled down to work.

Presently each made a series of discoveries.

Equality is a beautiful thing in theory and most annoying in practice.

Lisa's work was as important as Beard's—in her eyes, if not in his.

She wrote directly on her typewriter, a little machine that seemed like a toy, while he made copious notes in long hand. Her copy was clean and showed scarcely an erasure, while his pages were full of marginal notes.

When Lisa finished her day's work, she was ready to play, but when Beard began to write, he resented any interruption.

Of course these things did not come out all at once, and at each new temperamental disclosure, Lisa would shrug her pretty shoulders and try to laugh off the situation.

"Don't be a cross old bear! What would it matter if the public were deprived of its customary Austin Beard book? It wouldn't create an intellectual famine!"

She was planning to ask some people down for the week-end, and Beard had complained that he had started his first chapter and that guests in the house would upset him.

"My dear Lisa, you don't seem to realize that I have a contract with my publishers," he said irritably.

"Did you ever see an iron-clad contract?" She was in a particularly irresponsible mood, for her play was finished and she had sent it off that morning. Now she was ready to frivol, and Beard was not.

"There are contracts and contracts, and apparently you don't consider yours as sacred obligations," he began ponderously.

"Bosh!" retorted Lisa airily. Then she kissed him on the tip of his nose and sailed out of the room.

He stared after her. He had not taken this side of her nature into sufficient consideration. Not only were her stories frivolous—*she* was frivolous. He had a certain respect for any money-making talent, but it bored him to read her work. She did no more than skim the surface of life, and he was beginning to fear that her own emotions were no deeper than the ones she portrayed.

Upstairs, in her bedroom, Lisa hummed to herself in the effort to dislodge an unwelcome thought. Heaven forbid that she had made a second mistake! Beard socially was delightful, but he took his literary labors too seriously. If she gave in to him now, her life would be one long sacrifice to an elephantine temperament. But she had no thought of giving in. She had married for love and companionship, and she would not relinquish her secret plan to humanize her husband.

At luncheon she began to argue, and Beard, made nervous by her persistence, spilled soup down his waistcoat and said, "Damn!" under his breath.

Lisa sat up, her eyes sparkling. It was the most human thing that had happened since their marriage, and it gave her hopes of an eventful understanding.

She went on with her plans for the week-end party and gathered an amusing company together—amusing to her, not to Beard.

With his sexless intellect, he had felt as if the feminine breast were bared to his gaze, but when he met Ilga Vodstock, he admitted that he was puzzled. Ilga had translated Maeterlinck into Swedish. Lisa had invited her for the rare quality of her brain, but Ilga made Beard subtly conscious of the feline grace of her sinuous body.

It was not long before she made him confess that the house party was unwelcome.

"I never thought it would work. Lisa is like a buzzing fly. Her littleness must get on your nerves."

Ilga had no qualms about being disloyal. Beard was handsome and reputed rich, and she desired lovers and not a legal appendage.

Her remarks, however, startled him.

"You're quite mistaken," he hastened to assure her. "Lisa and I are devoted to each other."

"As long as neither of you interferes with the other's main purpose in life, which is creation. But while yours is the creation of the master mind, hers is the trashy output that a cheap public clamors for."

Beard frowned. He must defend his wife's work, and yet Ilga had expressed his own sentiment in regard to it. While he hesitated, she went on to something else.

Lisa was at the piano singing the Indian lyrics in her sweet contralto, and Max Ide, publisher of the *Radical Weekly*, was beside her.

Suddenly her voice quavered.

"Out of tune so quickly?" Ide asked.

"Lisa, what made you do it?"



He had offered her love in the days when she had been struggling to express herself. She had forgiven him, but she had never forgotten the compliment of his insult.

"Because I met a man whose genius did not overshadow his sanity."

Ide smiled.

"You thought you did. Are you so sure—now?"

He cast a contemptuous glance in the direction of Beard and Ilga. The novelist's face was disturbed, but the woman's was triumphant.

"Yes. It was to make him realize how sane he was that I asked you all down."

"We are to furnish the Greek chorus?"

"Exactly. Max, if you were as good as you are clever, you could be a leader of men."

"Thanks. I never hankered after the rôle of crusader."

Lisa smiled. She had herself in hand now, and she went on with her song. She had asked these people here, radicals all of them, in order to shock Beard into a normal frame of mind. He must be taught the evils of a self-indulged temperament. Out of the chaos that would ensue, she could evolve harmony. But she had not expected Ilga to supply a physical goad. That she had elected to do herself. Ilga was to show him temperament running rampant and here she was showing him feminine sympathy in supple curves.

Poor man! And he thought that every feminine instinct was clear to him!

The other guests paired off as Lisa had intended they should, but she had not planned that on the second night, Ilga should lead Beard out into the garden to quote passionate verse to him under a young moon.

After a time, she dropped verse and began to drip poison into his ears.

She spoke of Ide's brief infatuation for Lisa. It had been known to all of them.

"He recognized the quality of his passion, timed it to a nicety, and offered it to her for the length of its duration," she said. "Why Lisa refused puzzled us for a time, for Max could have given her the emotional stimulus she needed and yet left her free. Then I discovered her ordinary domestic strain. She should have married a linen draper and written herself into his children."

Ilga was beginning to chafe at Beard's stodgy turn of mind. Must she fling herself into his arms before he perceived what she was driving at? She came to the conclusion that she must picture the worst before she could thoroughly rouse his fears, and she took the surest steps to do that. No man of Beard's contemplative disposition, she argued, could fail to be frightened at the idea of children coming to disrupt his calm. Ilga figured it out. He would regard Lisa with suspicion and then he would run away from her. When he did that, Ilga would take him in. She made her calculations rapidly, but subtle as her mind was, she had missed out in her deductions.

Lisa married to a linen draper and mothering his children—it was a disquieting thought. Beard had wanted marriage, but he had not looked further than that. Lisa had been married before and had escaped maternity, and he had not risked a thought about her desiring children now.

He was lost in a sea of speculation. Then the warm night, the Oriental perfume with which Ilga drenched her hair, awoke desires, but not for her. While she preached her doctrine of free love, he was going over the finale of Lisa's last play. The man said: "Let's turn this house into a home?" and the woman asked: "What is lacking?" And then the man said: "A child."



He had thought it rather banal, but now he began to dwell on what it would mean if Lisa felt that way about their house. A child—a son—his son! He waited for the thrill, but it was not forthcoming.

Ilga resented his fit of abstraction.

"Man, you want something. What is it?" Her tone was cloyingly sweet, and she laid her hand over his possessively.

He shook her off and rose quickly from the bench on which they had been sitting.

"I didn't know until you told me," he said, and there was an undercurrent of excitement in his voice.

Ilga misunderstood.

"Are you going to thank me for opening your eyes?" she asked. And then she, too, rose and drooped with calculated abandon upon his breast.

He recoiled from the impact, and a light laugh floated to his ears. In the path before them stood Lisa. Her face was very pale.

Ilga turned, one hand still clutching Beard's shoulder. She met his wife's eyes defiantly.

"What are you going to do about it? I've won out, you see." She had been caught before in compromising situations, but her audacity had always carried her through safely.

But Lisa looked beyond and saw horror in Beard's eyes. It was the first time he had been entangled in the net of the predatory female, and in his confusion he did not know which way to turn for escape. She went to his rescue.

"Oh, no, Ilga," she said, and a prim note of wifely possession crept into her voice. "I have."

Beard came to himself with a shock. He, the man, the master, was being squabbled over by a pair of chattering women! He loosened Ilga's grasp with ungentle fingers, but he did not go to his wife. He stood apart and stared at her with hostile eyes. If he accepted

her help, he delivered himself to her in bondage, and who knew to what extent that might reach?

Suppose she did desire the life of the everyday domestic woman. His brain reeled at the thought of noisy children romping through the halls and perhaps even invading his study and littering his worktable with toys! Would he always be able to fight her maternal instincts successfully? He saw how she had carried her point in regard to the house party. He had told her how important it was that he should not be disturbed, once he had settled to his novel, and she had replied by kissing the tip of his nose. It was undignified. He had a right to expect better things of a widow who had remarried.

Ilga had spoken of her as a buzzing fly. That's what she was—a fly, an annoyance! His wrath grew as he realized that he had walked into her snare of his own accord.

"What am I to understand by these extraordinary remarks?" he demanded, and the deep tones of his voice boomed.

"Dear, it's too bad Ilga fussed you. I should have put you on your guard, but I thought the psychology of our sex was an open book to you." Lisa could not refrain from the slight dig. She had been frightened at seeing him in the Swedish woman's embrace, and he would have to pay for that.

"The desire for a little more knowledge is the true test of genius," said Ilga, still undaunted. She saw signs of growing revolt on Beard's part.

"I do not require knowledge that either one of you can supply. My work lacks the flippant touch that is natural to yours." He addressed Lisa, for his real quarrel lay with her. The Swedish woman's appeal had missed fire. Lisa, on the other hand, threatened the very foundations of his empire over himself. Thank God, he had realized it in time!

"Austin!" Lisa gasped out his name. "What do you mean?"

"If I had wanted to be cajoled, I should not have sought a wife. The type of entertainment that your curious friends have provided is utterly distasteful to me, but they appear to supply the proper environment for you. As for madame"—and now Ilga could no longer flatter herself that she had a chance of supplanting Lisa—"I have not met her kind since I was a youth and mistakenly believed that the deeper one descended into slime, the higher one could climb to the stars. I prefer my own conception of womanhood, thought out in the quiet of my own study, to anything that either one of you could reveal. Have I made myself quite clear?"

"Oh, quite." Ilga smiled broadly. "Poor Lisa, you should have listened to Max! It would have been wonderful while it lasted. But what did you expect to get out of a brown-bread-and-gravy affection?"

Lisa pulled herself together with an effort.

"Decency," she retorted.

Beard frowned.

"You attempted to attain your desire in a most indecent manner." Then he turned to Ilga. "As for brown bread and gravy, it has a solid flavor."

"Your approval makes it a classic. At least I shall not be entirely forgotten."

"Madame, wasps sting and flies buzz, and while they cause momentary annoyance, the effect is not lasting."

Ilga laughed and withdrew. She had gone down to rare defeat, but she fancied that Lisa also was a long way from victory.

Left alone with her husband, Lisa tried to carry it off with a light touch.

"Austin, you were put out, but that doesn't excuse the horrid things you said before Ilga." Her tone was childishly aggrieved, and it made him draw more closely than before into his shell of reserve.

"You shall not have anything to complain of in the future. You yourself said that an interest in literature did not create a bond, and you must forgive me for forcing a companionship upon you which I realize now must be as unwelcome to you as it is to me."

"Austin, you can't mean to say I haven't made you happy?"

"At our age, happiness depends upon comfortable surroundings."

"And haven't I given you a comfortable home?"

Her use of the word "home" roused the fears that Ilga had called into being. Suppose Lisa should quote tritely from her own play! The thought determined him to fight resolutely for his future peace of mind.

"Shall I be rude and truthful?" he asked.

Lisa suddenly recognized the futility of further struggle. She had misread her man. She could have handled him beautifully in a short story, but in real life, the student man of forty cherished his individuality to such an extent that he regarded the woman who threatened it as an enemy.

"Spare me! I wonder if it is ever possible to be kind as well as honest?"

His eyes saw a vision of freedom.

"Never, when the truth concerns a woman like you and a man like me. The sharp knife hurts, but it cuts clean."

"For the implication that it hurts, thank you."

Her eyes held him a moment, but in their wistful gaze he thought he read domesticity, and he twisted the knife.

"The charm of metaphor is that, while it suggests depth, it always skims lightly along the surface. Thank Heaven, our relationship has not gone deeper than a metaphor!"

He bowed stiffly, and then he passed on; and when he went out of the garden, he left that part of his life behind him forever.



# PLAYS AND PLAYERS

By

ALAN DALE

ALL delays are dangerous in war," said Dryden, in one of his "pomes," and I can't help thinking that theatrical managers must also have come to that conclusion. No sooner had the new season opened than—presto!—a veritable epidemic of "war" plays astonished the community. It was as if the theater positively hungered for the conflict; as if nothing else would be relied upon for drama, comedy, and melodrama; as if managers were afraid that they might be too late, if they delayed their productions. And altogether the situation was not lacking in a certain humorous quality.

Several of the plays sounded very much like condensed editorials, clipped from the daily newspapers; they appealed to patriotism in a politely kid-glove way, and they very diligently avoided any semblance of controversy. They touched upon the sentimental side of things, and interpolated "love" stories into their essence. Assuming—somewhat fallaciously, I think—that the theater is at its best when it is attacking the topics of the hour, these plays went at their task with zest, surprising energy, and a certain spirit of enthusiasm. The old-fashioned notion that people go to the play to forget the workaday world, and to ramble through the purple realms of imagination, was not considered.

"All delays are dangerous in war," said Dryden, and managers took no chances. Never should it be said of them that they were too late! Too late! As if it would ever be too late to dramatize the most sensational happenings of centuries! As if the present war would not be a "topic" long after our generation has been gathered to its forefathers! As if the mellowing effect of time would not touch with the sepia of history the flaring headlines and the black-typed sensations that greet us every morning at the breakfast table! But "all delays are dangerous in war." Why wait? Therefore the avalanche of war plays.

Manager Woods could not even wait until a burning July had faded into a more tolerable August or September. He rushed on his "Friendly Enemies" while the thermometer cavorted around the nineties. He was almost relentless. There was actually no escape. At the very moment when the war news was at its thickest, and the weather most ferocious, we were bidden to the Hudson Theater to see the first war play of the season. The fact that another on very much the same lines was imminent may have had something to do with Mr. Woods' hot-weather fervor. Delays are dangerous in war—and also in drama, it would seem.

So "Friendly Enemies" came to life, with its conflict between the German

blood and the American home, just ahead of "Allegiance," which treated the same situation in another way. It pictured for us two German-born citizens, one filled with love for his Teutonic ancestry, the other entirely won over to the land of his adoption, and fortunately it treated this theme in a purely "comedy" manner. Both the old men were painted in humorous colors, and whenever the subject threatened to become alarmingly serious, the playwrights, Samuel Shipman and Aaron Hoffman, were wise enough to remember that at the present moment audiences do not particularly yearn to be harrowed.

"Friendly Enemies" was the sort of play that couldn't conceivably fail. It had every element of popularity, and both German-born characters had qualities that were bound to "get over." The main point of the play dealt with the horror of the German father when he learned that his son had enlisted in the American army to fight his own flesh and blood in Germany. Of course, the idea is as old as the hills. Nevertheless, it was dished up rather alluringly, and the anguish of the old man, although it was laughed at by the other German, seemed real enough.

Of course the metamorphosis occurred in due time, and the old man was completely reformed. And how was that done? Easily. No sooner did he learn that his boy was on the transport that the Germans had sunk than, without one moment's hesitation, he cursed his native land. If "Friendly Enemies" had been a really serious play, this rapid-transit change might have been looked upon as a weak spot. But it was comedy. It was "out" for a swift appeal, and that it undoubtedly secured.

The two important rôles were admirably acted by Louis Mann, as the serious German, and Sam Bernard, as the other. Both actors gave the exact

significance to the characters that their audiences demanded, and the play was a success long before it was over. It was one of those successes that nothing could stay, and Mr. Woods need not even have feared delay. In the case of "Friendly Enemies," no delay could possibly have interfered with the triumphant course of the comedy. It went all by itself.

Then came "Allegiance," by "Prince and Princess Pierre Troubetzkoy (Amélie Rives)" and you will excuse me for "quoting" the authorship. The titles sounded opulent, and a "Prince and Princess" is a lovely change from a "Mr. and Mrs." In fact, "Prince and Princess Pierre Troubetzkoy (Amélie Rives)" was the only "comedy" that was allowed to emerge.

"Allegiance" proved to be enormously serious. The old man with the German instincts was without a smile. His son, also Germanly inclined, was equally gloomy, and his grandson, who enlisted in the American army, spouted patriotic sentiments with the enthusiasm of a geyser. Also, it was "dramatic." The news of the sinking of the *Lusitania* was an incident that was worked for all it was worth, and the effect upon the various characters in the play was rather graphically shown. In "Allegiance," our dear old friend, the spy, was there in full force. This character was lightly sketched into "Friendly Enemies" as well.

In the matter of the spy, I consider that he is as dangerous to the drama as he is to the cause. It is almost impossible to look upon him as anything but burlesque, as far as our plays are concerned. He has been seized upon by playwrights as a substitute for the deceased crook. Crooks are very serious propositions in the community, but the drama has made of them a joke. Not long ago, the crook was vanquished, and playwrights, perceiving that we were inclined to laugh at him

in the wrong place—and in the wrong place, laughter defeats its own object—reluctantly gave him up. In his place, behold the spy—nefarious as the crook, and quite as ubiquitous. The spy is now exactly where the crook *was*. We cannot endure his antics and contortions, and instead of thrilling us, they dissolve us in irrelevant laughter. In fact, there is no doubt at all as to the spy in drama. He has ceased to be anything but a nuisance, and, later on, he will be relegated to revues or to broad burlesque. One cannot eat a pie and have a pie. The spy has been eaten and masticated to the last shred. Still, in spite of all, "Allegiance" was not without value, and it was at least interestingly acted. The "Prince and Princess" had evidently perused very carefully all our editorials, and they embodied their substance in the utterances of their characters.

But it was in "Three Faces East," at the Cohan & Harris Theater, that the spy went stark, staring mad. Do you remember a crook play called "Cheating Cheaters," in which you never knew who was the crook and who wasn't? Well, "Three Faces East" strongly resembled that play, with spies for crooks. The most harmless people turned out to be working for the German cause, and vice versa. No sooner had you settled it in your mind that a certain character was quite on the level than he was seen to be the most sinister sort of espion. The Belgian butler, longing to avenge his country, was the very backbone of German infamy; the typist, supposed to be clicking a code message on her typewriter to the heroine, was American to the backbone—or at least English; and the heroine herself, who had received her orders from Wilhelmstrasse to enter the family of a British cabinet minister and rout him, was proved to be completely otherwise.

Talk of fooling an audience! The

people at the Cohan & Harris Theater were absolutely bamboozled. The idea that an audience doesn't like 'o be fooled is, of course, absurd. They tell you that joke in books on "technique." An audience does like to be fooled, and usually is, in some way or other. But in spy plays, the bamboozling calls for defter tactics than those practiced in "Three Faces East." When people laugh joyously in the wrong place, they cannot truthfully be said to have been thrilled, and that is what happened in this play. The audience smiled when it should have pulsed. It was all so ludicrous and so absurd.

I like to see gentlemen take rabbits out of hats and exude yards of tape from their mouths, because frankly one doesn't know how they do it. Nor does one bother to suspect. In the spy plays, one is always suspecting, and that is the trouble. One suspects the servants, the host, the hostess, the sweet little ingénue, and the "silly ass" Englishman. The genuine characters are also under suspicion. Even the inanimate objects on the stage do not escape. I look askance at a chair, a table, a bed, a lamp, a carpet, a safe—particularly a safe, because the stage loves safes. The fact that one is there to suspect, and that suspicion is the breath of life in plays of this ilk, are circumstances that militate against the serious acceptance of the spy play.

Then we had another very war play entitled "Under Orders," by Berte Thomas, at the Eltinge Theater. This was war from start to finish, and with only two actors in the cast. Just the same, one of them managed to pay his compliments to the spy with intense seriousness. "Under Orders" was produced by the manager responsible for "Friendly Enemies" and also responsible for still another play dealing with the conflict—to wit: "Where Poppies Bloom." Verily, Manager Woods must believe in the Dryden remark that "all



delays are dangerous in war." And, verily, he hath not delayed!

The two actors in "Under Orders" played four rôles—two apiece. Miss Effie Shannon appeared as an American mother at one time, and as a German mother at another; Mr. Shelley Hull played an American boy in the American army, and a German boy in the imperial guards. In spite of its paucity of cast, the play contained all sorts of "action" and varied assortments of drama. For instance, the American boy is taken prisoner and kept in Berlin, where he meets his mother's sister! She, married to a German, loathes her husband's people, and aids the American nephew to escape. Later on, the German boy goes to London, masquerading as the American youth, whom he strongly resembles, and actually succeeds in fooling the American mother, until he sits down to the piano and plays that instrument of torture. Thereupon, the American mother remembers that her boy never played the piano! Possibly if the German youth *hadn't* played the piano, poor mommer would never have discovered her mistake.

"Under Orders" had nothing but war—not an incident or a speech or a suggestion that didn't concern the war. One act was entirely devoted to the parting between mother and son, as he left for the front. This, it seemed to me, was not particularly happy at the present time, when such partings in real life drive one to the theater to forget them. But the theater just now won't let anybody forget anything. The theater rubs it in all the time and refuses to do anything else. There is no way to forgetfulness. Delays are so dangerous, you see—or don't see—that it would never do to wait until time had dulled our sensations. The theater is rabid and relentless in the pursuit of its "mission," and the war play is rampant and singularly aggressive.

"Under Orders" was billed as a "dramatic novelty," not by reason of its theme, but because the play was entirely in the hands of two actors. I can recall a play entitled "A Case of Arson" in which one actor, Mr. Henri Defries, played seven rôles, so you see that there is really nothing new under the sun, or *with* the stars! Nobody explained in this play exactly how the German officer managed to get into London with a German letter in his pocket, but he did that, and I suppose it was just "dramatic license!"

We had another play on the subject called "Mother's Liberty Bond," at the Park Theater, described as "the American patriotic comedy melodrama," but it was soon snuffed out of an existence that it did not deserve. It was indescribably amateurish and crude, and I should have avoided any mention of it, had it not been one of the offerings that must be ascribed to the war.

The season is so young that the war output is astonishing. Whether or not the public will tire of the theme as an entertainment remains to be seen, and by remembering that "all delays are dangerous in war," managers are taking no chances. They are making play while the Hun whines!

The Winter Garden show, this time called "The Passing Show of 1918," had its war features, one of them being a London air raid—which was also seen in "Three Faces East." The new Hippodrome production, "Everything," gave us two tableaux showing Château-Thierry in 1914 and 1918, besides other interpolations born of the war spirit. Even the pictures have the war theme filmed for all it is worth, and I should think that the theatrical season of 1918 would make pungent history. The American Civil War had to wait years and years before the drama took it up and theatered it, and some of the American Civil War plays were excellent—"Held by the Enemy"



and "Shenandoah" being capital examples. But since those days, our hurry and fever have progressed. We want to get there—and we want to get there first—and the devil take the hindmost.

None of the war plays I have seen up to the present are ideal. They touch upon the sensational incidents and those that can be interwoven into "love" affairs. They leave out salient matters, ethical considerations, and deeply vital truths. They are aiming for quick applause and the rapid satisfaction of the general public. Of course there will undoubtedly come a war play that will achieve what the real object of such a play should be. But it will not be to-day. It will not be the outcome of the idea that "all delays are dangerous in war." It will be written many

years hence, thoughtfully, patriotically, and perhaps poetically. The real war play cannot conceivably be written during the very progress of that war. It must bide its time, with sublime patience. Its aim will not necessarily be to "amuse" us or to furnish us with nothing more than an evening's entertainment. From this terrific struggle, something epic will happen later on. There will be a literary flavor to the war play that present concoctions entirely lack.

Just at present, we are scenting mere enjoyment. We go to see a production like "Yip, Yip, Yaphank" and thank conditions that we can revel in it. And, by the bye, that amateur performance by our soldiers is perhaps the only really thrilling "war play" that the season so far has given us.



## NOVEMBER

O THIN November sunshine  
On bare boughs black and dead,  
There is no screen of gold or green  
To dim the flame you spread.

Before these dark boughs waken,  
The earth must blanch with snow,  
And wild winds chill must have their will  
With us who walk below.

O thin November sunshine,  
I would that you were gone,  
And life again wake trees and men,  
And spring come swaggering on!

CLEMENT WOOD.

## Talks With Ainslee's Readers

WITH the exception of Chesterton, Henry C. Rowland, and F. E. Baily, the authors of all the stories in the present issue are women. We did not plan to bring this about. In collecting the material for this all-star number, we picked stories on their fiction merits and noticed afterward that the men were in the minority. As a matter of fact, AINSLEE's has gathered about itself a remarkable group of women writers, and some day, just to demonstrate the point, we may offer you a special table of contents for which women will be solely responsible. What do you think of the idea?

The complete novelette next month will be by Du Vernet Rabell, author of "When Satan Was Sick" and other clever AINSLEE's short stories. It will be called "The Woman Michael Married." Michael is a rich philanderer, more than half in love with a married woman of his own set. The latter's little son is swept beyond his depth on the bathing beach, one day when Michael is bound helpless in a wheel chair as a result of a sprained ankle. The man offers to pay any reward that a rescuer may claim. A professional swimmer, Mira Sacky, dives off the pier and brings the boy safely to shore. Later, she claims her reward. It proves to be the last thing that Michael had expected her to ask. This is only the first incident in a wholly original romance.

AMONG the short stories for December, we wish especially to call your attention to "Black Butterflies," by June Willard, and "When the Desert Blooms Again," by Achmed

Abdullah. June Willard will be remembered as the author of "The Riposte," in the October number, a story with a real thrill, and doubly interesting because it was this writer's first venture into fiction. "Black Butterflies" proves that "The Riposte" was no mere flash in the pan. We have accepted several other tales by Miss Willard, and know that you are going to like them all.

And now a word about poetry. You may have remarked that we are printing better verse by better poets all the time. This month George Sterling, Edna St. Vincent Millay, and Salomón de la Selva are represented. The last-named is a young Nicaraguan, the author of a volume entitled "Tropical Town." He recently enlisted in the British army, and is on his way to fight for the France he loves so well. In the next number, we shall print lyrics by De la Selva, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Charles Hanson Towne, William Griffith, Mary Carolyn Davies—and a hitherto unpublished poem by Alan Seeger, the American who died gloriously in the Foreign Legion of France on July 4, 1916. The discovery of this Seeger poem is a literary event. We consider ourselves very fortunate to have obtained it for AINSLEE's.

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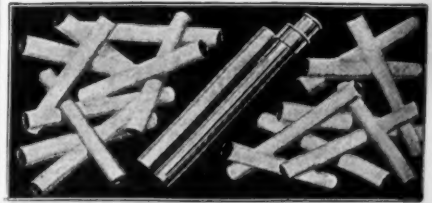
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BOX 3608, SCRANTON, PA.

Explain, without obligating me, how I can qualify for the position, or in the subject, before which I mark X.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> ELECTRICAL ENGINEER<br><input type="checkbox"/> Electric Lighting and Railways<br><input type="checkbox"/> Electric Wiring<br><input type="checkbox"/> Telegraph Engineer<br><input type="checkbox"/> Telephone Work<br><input type="checkbox"/> MECHANICAL ENGINEER<br><input type="checkbox"/> Mechanical Draftsman<br><input type="checkbox"/> Machine Shop Practice<br><input type="checkbox"/> Toolmaker<br><input type="checkbox"/> Gas Engine Operating<br><input type="checkbox"/> CIVIL ENGINEER<br><input type="checkbox"/> Surveying and Mapping<br><input type="checkbox"/> WIRE FOREMAN OR ENGINEER<br><input type="checkbox"/> STATIO NARY ENGINEER<br><input type="checkbox"/> Marine Engineer<br><input type="checkbox"/> Ship Draftsman<br><input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECT<br><input type="checkbox"/> Contractor and Builder<br><input type="checkbox"/> Architectural Draftsman<br><input type="checkbox"/> Concrete Builder<br><input type="checkbox"/> Structural Engineer<br><input type="checkbox"/> PLUMBING AND HEATING<br><input type="checkbox"/> Sheet Metal Worker<br><input type="checkbox"/> Textile Overseer or Supt.<br><input type="checkbox"/> CHEMIST | <input type="checkbox"/> SALESMANSHIP<br><input type="checkbox"/> ADVERTISING<br><input type="checkbox"/> Window Trimmer<br><input type="checkbox"/> Show Card Writer<br><input type="checkbox"/> Sign Painter<br><input type="checkbox"/> Railroad Trainman<br><input type="checkbox"/> ILLUSTRATING<br><input type="checkbox"/> Cartooning<br><input type="checkbox"/> BOOKKEEPER<br><input type="checkbox"/> Stenographer and Typist<br><input type="checkbox"/> Cert. Public Accountant<br><input type="checkbox"/> TRAFFIC MANAGER<br><input type="checkbox"/> Railway Accountant<br><input type="checkbox"/> Commercial Law<br><input type="checkbox"/> GOOD ENGLISH<br><input type="checkbox"/> Teacher<br><input type="checkbox"/> Common School Subjects<br><input type="checkbox"/> Mathematics<br><input type="checkbox"/> CIVIL SERVICE<br><input type="checkbox"/> Railway Mail Clerk<br><input type="checkbox"/> AUTOMOBILE OPERATING<br><input type="checkbox"/> Auto Repairing<br><input type="checkbox"/> Navigation<br><input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE<br><input type="checkbox"/> Poultry Raising |
|---|---|

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Present \_\_\_\_\_  
 Occupation \_\_\_\_\_  
 Street \_\_\_\_\_  
 and No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

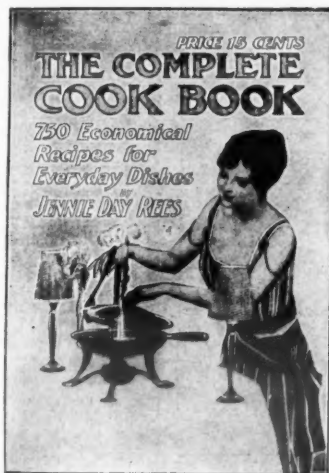
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# Bothered by the High Cost of Food?

Is Mr. Hoover's appeal for food conservation and wise substitution meeting with your coöperation? And are you one of the many thrifty housewives who find they are already feeding their families with all the economy consistent with health and comfort?

## It's all in knowing how, isn't it?

**You** know that a wholesome, appetizing dinner, of delicious flavor, temptingly served, does not always mean that it cost as much—or even half as much—as a flat, uninteresting, poorly cooked dinner. The whole question of good living at moderate cost is simplified by “The Complete



Cook Book.” It is just what its name signifies, containing seven hundred and fifty splendidly arranged, economical recipes, compiled by Jennie Day Rees.

Mrs. Rees is an expert upon the subject of foods and their preparation. The woman who uses these recipes will not need to preach to her family “the gospel of the clean plate.”

The price—fifteen cents—places it within the reach of everybody. And no woman can afford to be without it. For sale by all news dealers; or, if your dealer cannot supply you, add four cents to the above price and order direct from the publishers.

**Street & Smith Corporation, Publishers, New York**



# BUY YOUR CHRISTMAS GIFTS TODAY

## PAY AS YOU LIKE

**Do Your Christmas Shopping Early**  
Select all your Diamond and Jewelry gifts from our Catalog 17F. Send your order to us for prompt shipment. Your credit is good. We trust you for all the goods you want on the

**Lyon Charge-Account Plan**  
You pay nothing in advance—not one cent. Shipments are made at our expense and risk. You examine first and only after satisfied you send 20% as first payment. Then, send only 10% monthly at the rate of a few cents a day. You get full protection under our

**8% YEARLY DIVIDEND OFFER**  
Every "Lyon" Diamond is backed by our binding guarantee, covering the quality and value. MORE than that. On the exchange of any "Lyon" Diamond for a larger one, you get 8% YEARLY INCREASE IN VALUE—8% per annum MORE than what you paid.

**Our 75 Years Reputation** guarantees you honest goods at lowest prices. If our goods don't represent SUPERIOR VALUE, return at our expense. No obligation, annoyance, or red-tape. You don't pay a cent until you are pleased beyond your expectations. Send to Dept. 17F for our 80 page Christmas Bargain Catalog. Investigate our REMARKABLE OFFER. Let us explain how you can earn an EXTRA BONUS.

**J.M. LYON & CO. 1 Maiden Lane, New York**

## The Boys' Magazine

### Tell Your Boy About This!

Boys, you can make good money each month selling **The Boys' Magazine**. Gives splendid business experience of great value later on in life.

Write us today for 5 copies. Send no money.

The Scott F. Redfield Co.  
Dept. A28 Smethport, Pa.



EXCUSE ME  
Join a my busy day

### AINSLIE'S MAGAZINE

is printed with inks manufactured by

**W. D. WILSON PRINTING INK CO., LTD.,**

17 SPRUCE STREET, NEW YORK CITY

### Keeps Skin Smooth, Firm, Fresh — Youthful Looking



To dispel the tell-tale lines of age, illness or worry—to overcome flabbiness and improve facial contour—there is nothing quite so good as plain

#### Powdered SAXOLITE

Effective for wrinkles, crow's feet, enlarged pores, etc., because it "tightens" and tones the skin and underlying tissue. No harm to tender skin. Get an ounce package, follow the simple directions—see what just one application will do. Sold at all drug stores.

## Infantile Paralysis



These two letters and the photographs evidence the satisfactory results from treatment received at this Sanitarium by Miss Clara Gilbert, Delight, Ark., whose foot was deformed by Infantile Paralysis:

*I arrived home all right and my friends were greatly surprised to see me walk flat on my foot. When I came to your Sanitarium I walked on my toe. I will gladly answer all questions with regard to my foot.*

CLARA GILBERT,  
Box 45, Delight, Arkansas.

*I cannot praise your Sanitarium too highly for your great work. Clara's friends were surprised to see her foot straight. She has been quite a show girl since. We will gladly answer any inquiries in regard to your work for Clara.*

MRS. CORDA GILBERT,  
Box 45, Delight, Arkansas.

This private institution is devoted to the treatment of children and young adults afflicted with Club Feet, Infantile Paralysis, Spinal Diseases and Curvature, Hip Disease, Wry Neck, etc. Our valuable book "Deformities and Paralysis," with Book of References, free.

The McLain Orthopedic Sanitarium  
954 Aubert Ave., St. Louis, Mo.



Please mention this magazine when answering advertisements

# Uncle Sam Makes 'Em Strong

Reports from France indicate the delight and surprise of the French at beholding our hardy, robust National Army.

Men who were doubled up over desks, clerks from dry-goods stores, and members of every sedentary occupation have within the short space of a year been developed into strong, vigorous men.

How was this miracle performed? Uncle Sam knows, because he did it. *Just how* is explained by a splendid course of exercises and gymnastics that has been prepared by American experts for use in our army. The U. S. MANUAL OF PHYSICAL TRAINING tells how every man can improve his physical condition, no matter what it may be at present.

We publish a verbatim edition of the official document. It contains nearly 200 half-tone cuts illustrative of the different exercises, posed by West Point Cadets. Its price—50 cents—is little for such a complete guide to health and vigor. Throw away the quack medicines that you are taking and invest a small portion of their cost in this book, which will return you a bigger percentage of profit than a like amount ever did before.



**PRICE—50c PER COPY**

**Profusely Illustrated**

If sent by mail, add 5 cents per copy to cover postage.

**STREET & SMITH CORPORATION, Publishers**  
79 SEVENTH AVENUE    ::    ::    ::    NEW YORK CITY

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# DIAMONDS ON CREDIT

## The Best Gift of all—a Diamond Ring

Beautiful genuine Diamond Rings, any style 14-K gold mounting, special values at \$25, \$50, \$75, \$100 and up; easy terms



## Select Your Christmas Gifts from Our Jewelry Catalog

It shows over 2000 illustrations of Diamonds, Watches, Jewelry, etc. Whatever you select will be sent, all shipping charges prepaid. You see and examine the article right in your own hands. If satisfied, pay one-fifth of purchase price and keep it; balance divided into eight equal amounts, payable monthly. To the Cash Buyer: While our prices are lower than the cash prices quoted by other concerns, we make a discount of 5 per cent for cash in full in advance, or on delivery.

# WATCHES ON CREDIT

We Received the  
Gold Medal  
Highest Honors

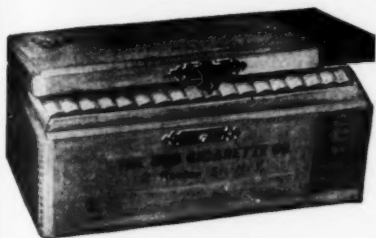


## Watches

Our Catalog illustrates and describes all the new watches—solid gold and gold filled cases. Splendid bargains in 55-year guaranteed watches on credit terms as low as \$2.50 a month.

STORES IN LEADING CITIES **LOFTIS BROS. & CO., National Credit Jewelers**

World's Fair  
Universal Exposition  
Dept. F843 100 to 108 N. State St.  
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS



## Bud Cigarettes

Plain or Cork Tip. Made of selected Pure Turkish Tobacco, with a distinctive blend which is appreciated by smokers of discrimination and taste. 100 Bud Cigarettes securely packed in Mahogany Wood Boxes. Send us \$2.00 for a box of 100. Sent postpaid to any address. The Bud Cigarette Company, 2 Rector Street, New York City.



Nuxated Iron increases strength and endurance of delicate, nervous, run-down people in two weeks' time in many instances. It has been used and endorsed by such men as Hon. Leslie M. Shaw, former Secretary of the Treasury and Ex-Governor of Iowa; Former United States Senator and vice-presidential nominee Chas. A. Towne; General John L. Clem (Retired) the drummer boy of Shiloh who was sergeant in the U. S. Army when only 12 years of age; also United States Judge G. W. Atkinson of the Court of Claims of Washington and others. Ask your doctor or druggist about it.

IN THIS DAY AND AGE attention to your appearance is an absolute necessity if you expect to make the most out of life. Not only should you wish to appear as attractive as possible for your own self-satisfaction, which is alone well worth your efforts, but you will find the world in general judging you greatly, if not wholly, by your "looks," therefore it pays to "look your best" at all times. Permit no one to see you looking either-wise; it will injure your well-constantly make resist the failure or success of your life. Which is to be your ultimate destiny? My new Nose-Shaper "TRADOS" (Model 24) corrects now ill-shaped noses without operation, quickly, safely and permanently. It is pleasant and does not interfere with one's occupation, being worn at night.

## YOU HAVE A BEAUTIFUL FACE BUT YOUR NOSE?



Before



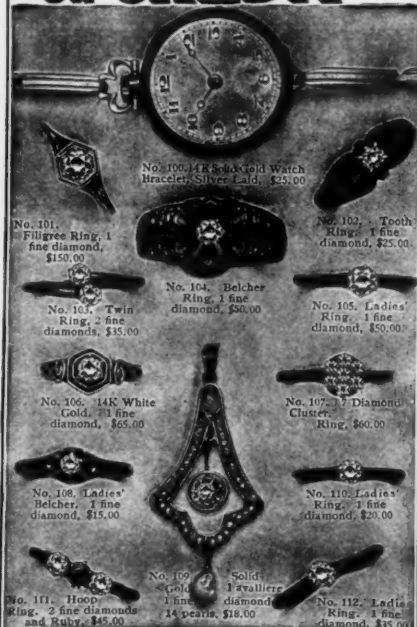
After



Write today for free booklet, which tells you how to correct ill-shaped noses without cost if not satisfactory.  
**M. TRILETY, Face Specialist, 1044 Ackerman Bldg., Binghamton, N. Y.**

Please mention this magazine when answering advertisements

# DIAMONDS AND OTHER JEWELRY ON CREDIT



No. 100. 14K Solid Gold Watch  
Bracelet Silver Laid, \$25.00

No. 101. Filigree Ring, 1  
fine diamond, \$150.00

No. 102. Tooth  
Ring, 1 fine  
diamond, \$25.00

No. 103. Twin  
Ring, 2 fine  
diamonds, \$35.00

No. 104. Belcher  
Ring, 1 fine  
diamond, \$50.00

No. 105. Ladies'  
Ring, 1 fine  
diamond, \$50.00

No. 106. 14K White  
Gold, 1 fine  
diamond, \$65.00

No. 107. 17 Diamond  
Cluster  
Ring, \$60.00

No. 108. Ladies'  
Belcher, 1 fine  
diamond, \$15.00

No. 109. Solid  
Gold, 1 fine  
diamond, \$20.00

No. 110. Ladies'  
Ring, 1 fine  
diamond, \$20.00

No. 111. Hoop  
Ring, 2 fine diamonds  
and Ruby, \$45.00

No. 112. Ladies'  
Ring, 1 fine  
diamond, \$35.00

No. 113. Solid  
Gold, 1 fine  
diamond, \$16.00

## DE LUXE XMAS GIFTS

### Send No Money—Examine Free

Let us send you a genuine Diamond on approval. You don't have to buy unless you are absolutely satisfied in every way.

Highest quality Blue-white. Perfect Cut Diamonds, set in 14K gold mountings, sent by express, prepaid, subject to your examination and approval—no red tape—no security.

### Buy Today—10 Months to Pay

If, upon examination, the article you order is found satisfactory, pay one-fifth of the purchase price and the balance in ten equal monthly installments. Each and every Diamond we sell is accompanied by our binding guarantee.

### 7½% Increase in Value Assured

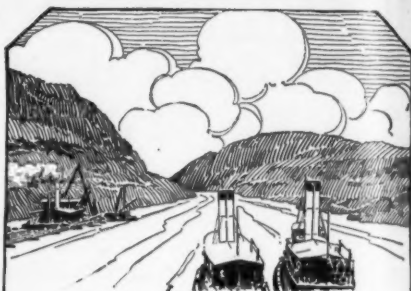
Diamond values are constantly advancing. We assure you a steady advance in value on any Diamond bought from us by our unparalleled 7½% Profit Sharing Offer. We stand alone in making this astounding offer.

### Catalog No. 98S of Jewelry Bargains FREE

Send for your FREE copy of our 32-page Diamond and Jewelry Catalog No. 98S. A splendid assortment of high grade Diamond Jewelry: Rings, Pins, La Vallieres, and other articles that make most acceptable Xmas gifts. Also Cameras and Photographs.

### L. W. SWEET & CO., INC.

Dept. 98S, 2 and 4 Maiden Lane, New York City



## How Is Your “Culebra Cut”?

The Panama Canal is a clear passageway as far as the Culebra Cut. But Gold Hill has a way of slipping into the cut. And until dredges can clear the channel, the industrial schedule of the world is out of gear.

If engineers tried to blast out the slide from Culebra Cut they would have more slides to cope with. If you try to blast out accumulated waste from your Culebra Cut with pills, salts or purges, you will increase your constipation—and next time you will have to take stronger medicine in a larger dose.

You can't dredge your canal

You can clean it out with Nujol

Nujol softens the mass, and supplies the intestinal canal with sufficient moisture to replace deficient mucus. It causes the obstructive waste matter to pass gently out of your system at a regular hour, absorbing and removing the poisons as it goes. Nujol regularly keeps the traffic of your mind and body operating on schedule.

You admire the Panama Canal system. Why not safeguard your own? Write for free booklet, “Thirty Feet of Danger.”

### Warning:

NUJOL is sold only in sealed bottles bearing the Nujol Trade Mark. All druggists in U.S. and Canada. Insist on Nujol. You may suffer from substitutes.

## Nujol Laboratories

STANDARD OIL CO. (NEW JERSEY)

50 Broadway, New York



# Test Phonographs This Way Before You Decide Which One You Want

## Does It Play All Records?

Or does it require you to limit your selection to its own make? Do you want to own a phonograph which will keep you from hearing *all* your favorites?

Some artists sing for one record maker, some for another.

The Brunswick plays *all* records, and at their best. And it is the only famous instrument with the Ultona, one of the chief features of the Brunswick Method of Reproduction.

The Ultona is a new conception, not an attachment nor makeshift. It is a universal player, instantly adaptable to any make of record.

Just a turn of the hand presents the proper diaphragm and needle. And it is made slightly oversize so as to develop the hitherto lost sound waves.

## What About Tone?

In the Brunswick Amplifier we use wood solely—no metal castings, no tin. We believe in the violin principle.

The Brunswick Amplifier is molded of holly-wood, in a shape demanded by acoustic laws.

Thus tone is given every opportunity to expand. Wood gives the proper vibration which a casting can not.

And so the Brunswick Method of Reproduction, heralded as the most advanced of all, brings new tonal values, new standards.

One must hear The Brunswick to appreciate its superiority. Your ear will be instantly appreciative. You'll say you never heard such wondrous reproduction before.

## Does The Brunswick Cost More?

No. In spite of its overwhelming advantages, the price is comparable with those lacking Brunswick ideas. Model for model, The Brunswick has been kept at the usual prices. Yet it could easily command more.

This instrument is made by the House of Brunswick; a leader for 73 years in the wood-working art. We have long maintained a nation-wide organization, with branches and dealers everywhere.

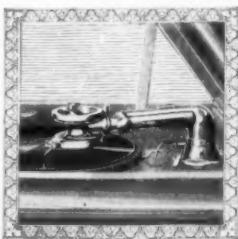
And so the cost of distribution is lessened. Thus we can afford to offer a super-phonograph at ordinary prices.

## Where Can I Hear The Brunswick?

There is a Brunswick Dealer in your town. He will be glad to play The Brunswick for you, and show you the advantages of the Brunswick Method of Reproduction.

This will not put you under the slightest obligation to buy. We want you to make comparisons. You will then appreciate The Brunswick betterments.

Go now and hear this new-day instrument. Then decide if you could be happy with another.



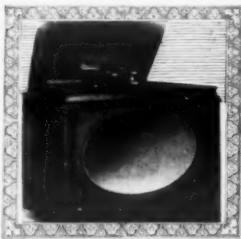
The  
**Brunswick**

THE BRUNSWICK-BALKE-  
COLLENDER CO.

General Offices: CHICAGO and  
NEW YORK

Branch Houses in Principal Cities of  
United States, Mexico and Canada

Canadian Distributors: Musical Merchandise  
Sales Co., Excelsior Life Building, Toronto



... and at big hotels  
and clubs, East and West

*A fact:*

Sales reports from 8 leading cities—just  
as received at our main office during the  
last week in August:

ARMY AND NAVY CLUB, Washington, D. C.:  
"Fatima sells biggest—irrespective of price"

BELLEVUE-STRATFORD, Philadelphia:  
"Fatima outsells all other cigarettes,  
except two 25-cent brands"

CONGRESS HOTEL, Chicago:  
"Fatima is one of the leading sellers among the better brands"

HOTEL ASTOR, N. Y. City:  
"We sell more Fatimas than any other cigarette"

HOTEL GURSON, Cincinnati:  
"Fatima leads all other brands in sales"

HOTEL SINTON, Cincinnati:  
"More Fatimas are sold than any other cigarette"

HOTEL WILLARD, Washington, D. C.:  
"Fatima is biggest-selling cigarette"

MARSHALL FIELD'S GENTLEMEN'S GRILL, Chicago:  
"Fatima is as big if not a bigger seller than  
any of the other high-class brands"

MISSOURI ATHLETIC CLUB, St. Louis:  
"Fatima still holds first place in sales"

OFFICERS' CLUB, West Point:  
"More Fatimas smoked than any other cigarette"

RACQUET CLUB, St. Louis:  
"Fatima is largest seller"

THE PONCHARTRAIN, Detroit:  
"Fatima is the second best-selling brand"

THE SHOREHAM, Washington, D. C.:  
"With one exception, Fatima is best seller"

UNION CLUB, Cleveland:  
"Fatima is one of the largest sellers"

# FATIMA

*A Sensible Cigarette*

And Fatima gives full, honest value—  
instead of "shovey" looks. It is for  
every smoker who wants a cigarette  
that never "talks back," even if a man  
should smoke more often than usual.

*Leggett & Myers Tobacco Co.*

